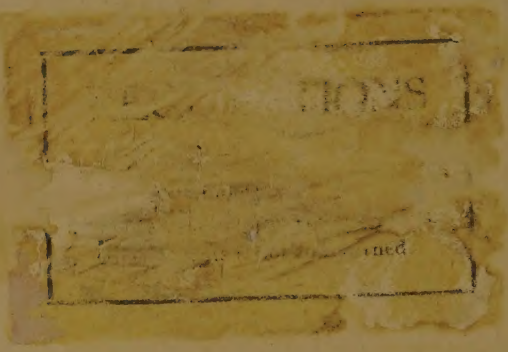
CAMPION

A Tragedy

REV. J. G. MORGAN



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CAMPION:

A Tragedy,

IN A PROLOGUE AND FOUR ACTS.

BY THE

REVEREND G. LONGHAYE, S.J.

Translated into English Blank Verse

BY

JAMES GILLOW MORGAN.

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TO THE

PERSECUTED AND EXILED

JESUITS OF FRANCE,

WHO HAVE FOUND AN ASYLUM IN

ENGLAND,

THIS TRANSLATION

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY THEIR HUMBLE AND GRATEFUL SERVANT,

THE TRANSLATOR.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

WHILST staying recently in the vicinity of the Apostolic College, Littlehampton, I had the privilege of becoming acquainted with the Reverend G. Longhaye, S.J., the well-known French dramatic author. He kindly gave me permission to present some of his works to the public in an English garb. I have chosen to reproduce "Campion" as the first of the series, chiefly on account of the recent beatification of the English martyrs, and also because it bears some relation to the religious persecution in France at the present day.

The translation is *almost* literal. Curiously enough, a few of the lines in the original seem to be a reproduction of certain well-known verses of some of our English poets, though the author had no knowledge of the similarity.

As a stage-play, the tragedy may be produced with either more or less numerous and appropriate accessories. It will bear curtailing, if necessary. The more powerful passages will be found suitable as extracts for the display of elocutionary ability. It will not, I trust, be without interest to the general reader.

I am indebted to the *Liverpool Daily Post* for the annexed Summary of Blessed Edmund Campion's career. It has been skilfully compiled from Simpson's "Edmund Campion"; London, 1867.

J. G. M.

St. Joseph's Diocesan College,
Upholland, Lancashire,
Feast of the Purification B.V.M., 1889.

Author's Edition.

Campion, Alfred Mame et Fils, Editeurs, Tours, France, 1883.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH it was impossible for me to embody in the plot of this tragedy the adventurous apostolate of Blessed Edmund Campion in its entirety, yet I could not separate his conversion from his martyrdom. For this reason I have introduced the prologue, which, though not detrimental to the strict moral unity of the whole play, cannot be correctly considered a first act, since it precedes the rest by a period of fifteen years.

Moreover, there will be observed throughout the tragedy certain transpositions of historical events. I have anticipated by four years the Anglican ordination of Blessed Campion, his conversion and flight, in order to make these incidents coincide with the

celebrated visit of Elizabeth to Oxford in 1566. On the other hand, I have somewhat postponed the death of Richard Cheney. Blessed Campion saw the Queen at Leicester's palace in the early days of his captivity. The introduction of this episode after his condemnation produces, I think, a greater dramatic effect, and, on the whole, represents more truthfully the way in which Elizabeth reconciles her dignity as a queen with her curiosity as a woman.

Throughout the play, fiction follows the guidance of history. Thus Blessed Henry Walpole, eventually a Jesuit-martyr, is represented as Blessed Campion's beloved pupil, whereas, in fact, Blessed Walpole saw him for the first time at Tyburn, where he was suddenly converted by the spectacle. I have endeavoured to reproduce in him some of the strange fluctuations which certain illustrious Anglicans of these times have experienced before entering the True Church.

The odious man, Elliott, was connected with Campion in his youth. As to Charles Hopton, his character originated in the fact that the lieutenant of the Tower was dis-

missed in disgrace, by reason of the discovery that his daughter, Cecily, was a Catholic. My boldest assumption has been that the Holy Eucharist was conveyed into the Tower of London, as it was into the prisons of the Commune in Paris, in 1871. But may I not herein be justified, if necessary, by a certain happy recollection?

Elizabeth, Cecil, Leicester, and Cheney are such, I trust, as history represents them. As regards the hero of the play, I had no need to enhance his character. His reputation as a preacher, his brief but heroic apostolate, his defiance of Anglicanism, his four months' captivity, and his cruel death, aroused public opinion at that time to a point which may be surprising, but which cannot be doubted. The renowned Oxford scholar, who was held in universal esteem for his eloquence and learning—the Anglican deacon, who became a Jesuit, a missionary, and a martyr—Blessed Edmund Campion—stands forth as one of the most illustrious and fascinating figures in the history of the English persecution.

The blood then shed has not been unfruitful.

Have we not a proof thereof in the liberty we enjoy of glorifying the martyrs on that same English soil which was once so cruel to them?*

ABERDOVEY, NORTH WALES,
2nd February, 1883.

* V. Destombes, "Persécution religieuse en Angleterre sous Elizabeth"; Simpson, "Edmund Campion". London, 1867.

INTRODUCTION.

BLESSED EDMUND CAMPION.

Of the celebrated scholar, professor, proctor, preacher, missionary, author, and martyr, Edmund Campion, it is difficult to write in the compass of a brief narrative. His biographers delight to dwell upon the marvellous beauty and powers of elocution of the precocious child of thirteen, the "Champion" of all the schools of London, who was deputed to meet Queen Mary at Temple Bar on 3rd August, 1553, as she made her solemn entry into the city, accompanied by the chief nobility of the realm, with the foreign ambassadors, and eight thousand horsemen. The reputation won in London was enhanced at Oxford by his funeral oration at the reburial of poor Amy Robsart, Robert Dudley's murdered wife, and still more by his public

disputation in 1566, in the presence of Queen Elizabeth and her suitor, Robert Dudley. "Ask what you like," said Dudley to Campion afterwards, in private, by express commission of the Queen, "the Queen and I will provide for the future."

We need not trace how he gradually found that he was no longer at home in Oxford. On the termination of his proctorship he withdrew from Oxford, and after a time sought shelter in Ireland. From Ireland he passed through England to Douai, thence he journeyed to Rome, and finally was received into the Society of Jesus. For many years he was employed by the Order in Bohemia, till the time came when, at Cardinal Allen's instigation, the Jesuits resolved upon sending some missionaries of their Order into England. Campion and Persons were chosen as the pioneers of the movement. The story of their landing in England, their missionary labours, the extraordinary enthusiasm evoked by their presence, the efforts of the Government spies and pursuivants to run them to earth, their hairbreadth escapes for more than a year, the conversion of numerous lukewarm

Catholics and Protestants in that year, the printing of Campion's famous book, "Decem Rationes," its distribution through the halls in Oxford, the vehement controversy it called forth, the renewed efforts made to capture its author at any cost, his final seizure at Lyford, his public entrance into London as a prisoner, being led in procession round all the markets on market day—are all incidents in Campion's life which add to the interest of his career, and lend to his biography an air of romance.

His career was nearly over. On Saturday, 21st July, 1581, he reached the Tower of London, and on 1st December of the same year he was led out to die at Tyburn. In the interval he had met Elizabeth and Dudley once more, on 25th July, in Dudley's house, —had been examined again and again, racked repeatedly till all use of his hands was gone, and a companion had to lift his hand to plead as he stood before his judge in Westminster Hall, and in the intervals of his rackings he had been confronted in public disputation by many champions of the Established Church, and had planted a seed in the heart

of Philip Arundel which later on took deep root. He died on 1st December, protesting his faith as a Catholic, and with a prayer for the Queen—"Your Queen and my Queen".

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Edmund Campion, Master of Arts, and a deacon of the Established Church; afterwards, a priest of the Society of Jesus.

Richard Cheney, Anglican bishop of Gloucester.

Robert Dudley, lord chancellor of the University of Oxford; afterwards, *Earl of Leicester*.

Robert Cecil, secretary and minister under Elizabeth.

Henry Walpole, student; afterwards, chaplain to the Earl of Leicester.

Tresham, *Fitton*, } students; afterwards, Catholic noblemen.

Catesby, *Tilney*, } Catholic noblemen.

Elliott, student; afterwards, agent to Cecil.

Owen Hopton, lieutenant of the Tower of London.

Charles, his son.

Norris, Owen Hopton's successor.

A Page (of Leicester's).

SOLDIERS.

SCENE, Oxford, 1566. An interval of fifteen years. Then, SCENE, London, 1581.

CAMPION.

PROLOGUE.

SCENE.

Saint John's College, Oxford. Master Edmuna Campion's room. 1566.

WALPOLE, TRESHAM, *and* FITTON *are discovered decorating Campion's room.* ELLIOTT *looks on with a contemptuous air.*

Tresh. [*near the window*].
The shades of evening fall.
Fitt. [*also at the window*]. And, in the town,
Right merrily the festive hours fly by.
Athwart the sky a thousand bonfires gleam,
And Oxford's ancient towers trace dark festoons.
Wal. Time tarries not; then why, friends, tarry we?
Should Edmund come——
Ell. [*half opening the door*]. Nay, I will see to him.
Wal. Then, speed we on.
Tresh. The festival runs high.

Wal. 'Tis wonderful! We ask but ample time
Wherein to gladly make all meet prepare.
Where, Fitton, are the scutcheons?
Fitt. [*reaching them*]. Here at hand.
Ell. Humph! Oxford's coat of arms, and England's too!
Tresh. [*helping* WALPOLE *to hang them up*].
We'll lend a festive air to this dull cell.
Fitt. This hive of labour, closed to outward din,
Is little wont, good Tresham, to look gay.
Wal. Now, scatter roses and green leaves about.
Tresh. These manuscripts of sombre hue, behold,
Are like gay greybeards smiling 'neath the flowers.
Ell. Sweet innocence! (*ironically*).
Wal. Sweet innocence?
Tresh. Be 't so.
Fitt. No doubt, we love our learnèd master well.
Wal. We know his heart, friend Elliott, and, perchance,
This childlike act will gladden his return
More than to-day's proud triumph flattered him.
Tresh. Yet, oh! how great a triumph!
Ell. [*contemptuously*]. Tut! full well
'Tis known that Campion's soul is steeped in pride.
Fitt. Say'st so?
Tresh. Would Elliott envy him?
Fitt. Perchance.
Wal. His honours do engender pride in us.
Didst see, good Tresham, with what easy grace

Our master bore himself afore the court?

Tresh. And didst thou note the whispered word of praise
With which the Queen did favour his fair speech?

Fitt. And how the great lord chancellor did seem,
Before her Royal Grace, full high elate
At having wardship of such noble parts?

Ell. [*turning over the leaves of a book*].
Humph! Dudley! soon to be our gracious king!
Forsooth, he can make smooth the path for friends:
The smiles of fortune on your master beam.

Fitt. [*aside, to* TRESH.]. Dost mark the murmurs of that envious tongue?

Tresh. 'Twere vain. No length of years can e'er obscure
The scene our eyes have feasted on to-day.
Within these sacred walls, built by our sires,
Hath stood the court, 'mid sheen of diamonds,—
Its opulence displayed to envious eyes,—
To honour knowledge and our mental toils.
How brave a sight, good Walpole, 'twas to see
Upon her throne old England's youthful Queen,
In gentle grace and sovereign grandeur clad,
Wreathing sweet smiles! While 'neath her crown of gold
Swelled forth the pride that flows in Tudor veins!

Wal. Know'st thou what food hath nourished her great mind?

Tresh. Ay, ay, methinks.

Fitt. In ev'ry worthy art
'Tis said she is well skilled and learnèd, and
Full fitted in this mental tournament
To name the victor and bestow the prize.
Wal. God, Who, by right of heritage, hath placed
Old England's glorious sceptre in her hand,
Hath also lavished on Elizabeth
The richest gifts that grace the mightiest kings.
Fitt. Her peerless beauty hath a magic power,
And all her charms but veil e'en manhood's might.
Tresh. And from her eyes, wherein her soul doth sit,
A brightness beams which bids and is obeyed.
Wal. God save Elizabeth!
Fitt. How fondly, too,
Are English hearts devoted to their Queen.
Wal. The lion, chafing 'neath the noblest yokes,
In meek submission licks her gentle hand.
Ell. 'Tis ever so! The like idolatry
Environed Mary when she first was crowned.
Fitt. What then?
Ell. Why, all that love was ripe too soon:
One mighty sea of blood engulfed it all.
Fit. And so, perchance——
Ell. [*with affected foresight*]. We'll see.
Fitt. A prophet, thou?
Wal. But all her power the Queen doth so dispense
As to efface her cruel sister's deeds.

These eight bright years, her wise and winsome rule
Hath calmed the troubled sea of rival creeds.
All English Christians, pacified by her,
Freed from the yoke of Rome—too long endured—
Will now be merged in one broad unity.

Fitt. E'en here, to-day, her steadfast watchfulness
Bade those contentious spirits be at peace:
Struck from debate, with threats of punishment,
The problems framed for our disunion——

Tresh. 'Twas politic!

Wal. But, oh, 'twas wise and good!
Wouldst thou, my friend, that, in fair England here
The torch of discord be inflamed anon?
The Queen protects us. 'Tis enough.

Ell. We'll see.

Wal. Lo! to our Church, by law established,
Each day do flock the noblest of our race.
But yesterday, and Master Edmund knelt
Before my lord of Gloucester, and rose up
A deacon.

Ell. [*significantly*]. Ay,—for higher flights anon!

Fitt. And how?

Ell. Why, Gloucester is a noble see.

Fitt. What say'st?

Ell. A lordly title and fair tithes.
Full soon, my friend, thou'lt read mankind aright.

Tresh. What meaneth he?

Wal. Would Campion basely yield
To barter his great soul for Cheney's gold?

Fitt. 'Tis false!

Wal. With vile suspicions wouldst denounce
Him who hath honoured us and won our love?

Tresh. And in this place?

Ell. Pray pardon me, good sirs.
I erred in wounding thus your simple loves.

Wal. Thy presence owes its sanction to our will:
Why courtest thou our fellowship? What end,
We ask, impels thee who art none of his?

Fitt. [*who has half opened the door*].
Forbear my friends; lo! Campion doth approach.
Ah! no; see, Cheney, unattended, comes.

Tresh. My lord of Gloucester!

Wal. [*to* ELLIOTT, *who skulks away*, R.]
Ay, take to thy heels!
Away! and shun henceforth our countenance.

Enter CHENEY, L.

Cheney. You here! And where is Campion?

Wal. Good my lord,
We do expect him here anon.

Cheney [*looking round the cell*]. E'en so!
But why this joyous splendour,—this brave show?
Ah! ah! I see. You do devise some plot.

Tresh. Engendered, good my lord, in grateful minds.

Fitt. A sweet conspiracy of loving hearts!

Wal. A welcome tendered to the conqueror!

Cheney [*seating himself*].
A like intent hath urged my presence here.

Ay, let us all awhile as friends conspire.
He'll find us here, in loving rivalry,
Exulting o'er his triumphs and fair name—
Myself, his agèd sire, and you, his sons.

Wal. My lord, this is an honour passing great.

Cheney. Nay, let our noble Edmund learn our love.

Tresh. I hear his footsteps.

Fitt. Lo! at last he comes.

Enter CAMPION, L.

Camp. What wondrous sight is this? Thou here, my lord!
These lamps and garlands! What! a festival?

Cheney. A playful snare, good Edmund, set for thee.
Though such great honours have to-day been thine,
This sweeter homage do we gladly pay;
And my paternal love is merged in theirs.

Camp. [*disturbed*]. My lord——

Cheney. Thou art not well. Why look'st so pale?

Camp. 'Tis nought.

Cheney. Perchance his honours burthen him.

Wal. Oh! say, have we offended?

Camp. Deem not so.
I gladly render what dear thanks I may
For this sweet outcome of your thoughful love.

Cheney. We must at once allow him rest awhile.

Tresh. We will withdraw.

[*Exeunt* TRESHAM, FITTON, *and* WALPOLE, R.

Camp. [*with an affectionate farewell gesture. To* CHENEY]. Pray pardon me.

Cheney. How now?
Thou dost conceal some deep, unwonted grief.

Camp. What! I, my lord?

Cheney. Ay, thou. These tearful eyes,
Deep glancing into thine, do read e'en so.
[*A brief silence.*
Can, then, man's heart be to itself so false
That one must needs convince it of its bliss?
Must I recall the scenes of this bright day,—
Thine eloquence, that did entrance the court,
And hold the Queen nigh spellbound in amaze?
By ev'ry fairest hope thou art allured.
What rays of future glory beam on thee!
Oh! happy day!

Camp. Ah! ne'er was I so sad.

Cheney. But what foul charm doth poison thus the feast?
What envious fiend bids this dark tempest rise?

Camp. My lord, if it were God!——

Cheney. Strange! strange!

Camp. 'Tis He.
His awful voice I hear.

Cheney. And that to-day?

Camp. E'en so. In presence of the Queen and court,
Whilst nought but praise with siren voice I heard,
Whose giddy laugh entranced my wistful soul,

A mocking echo fell upon mine ear.
Amid the din of pompous phrase and speech,
Amid the ceaseless war of empty words,
With heart dismayed, and powerless to protest,
I heard that echo cry: "Apostate, thou!"

Cheney. Edmund! Beware!

Camp. Perchance my words offend.
But, pardon me, my lord; thou hast my love,
And yet, canst warrant us the peace we seek?
Art sure of that great goal towards which we tend?
Nay, err we not through man's inconstancy?
Forgive this sudden impulse of my grief—
Thou, whom I ever honoured as my sire,—
But I do suffer, and I thirst for truth.

Cheney [*musing*]. A cruel thirst sometimes!

Camp. It burns my veins.
This very day, amid that wordy strife,
To our grave doctors I would fain have said:
"A truce to subterfuge and dumb deceit;
Speak out but that which you, perforce, conceal.
Ye learnèd priests and prelates — England's guides—
Why shun we thus the path our fathers trod?
Lead we our docile flocks to realms of bliss?
Obey we Rome, Geneva, London——?"

Cheney [*sadly*]. Ah!
And not a soul would e'er have dared reply.
What boots it, Edmund, to revive these themes?
Silence is best, where lack of knowledge rules.

Camp. And thus our Church is made the fool of chance,
And Christ but founded Babel o'er again.
I'll none of it, my lord.
Cheney. At least thou know'st
The days in which we live are out of joint.
Dim are the lamps that lighted once our path.
Thy heart is pure, and God doth guard thy steps.
Be hopeful.
Camp. What! and shall I cease to seek?
And must I quell my restless love of truth?
Cheney. No, no! Seek! Study!
Camp. Study! oh! the task!
'Tis study that has dried my very blood.
How oft, amid my nights of fruitless toil,
Methought I saw the dazzling rays of truth,
But, lo! when questioned by my anguished soul,
The teachers of the past together cried:
"List! thou who fain wouldst learn, adore,—believe,
Lo! Peter speaks! the lamp shines bright in ROME!"
Cheney. E'en so?
Camp. [*after a pause*]. What title must I give that Church
To which thy hands did lately bind me, when,
Alas! thou didst ordain me in her name?
Cheney. Spare, spare thy words! That Church is thine!
And she is Christian, spite of her disgrace.

Disgrace! how deeply have I mourned for her—
I, whom her friends have treated as her foe!
The more I grieve, the more my faith is tried,—
More deeply do I blush to turn my back,
And thus betray my mother unto them.
Stand fast by me, that we may serve her still,
And keep her ancient treasure safe from harm—
That sacred Truth, with which they madly jest—
That heavenly gem, which under foot they tread.
Stay! brighter days will come. What wouldst thou do?
'Twere wise to wait; 'twere virtue to be dumb.
Away with barren praise and haughty strife,
Which soon must end in exile, want, and chains.
What wouldst thou win by this haphazard play?

Camp. My soul's salvation, and the sight of God!

Cheney. Is this the time to dream of martyrdom?

Camp. But, good my lord, Faith vanisheth, and lo!
She's borne away upon the ebbing tide,
As, in its bed, a sea sinks, ne'er to rise.
O'er-wise inaction, and a treacherous peace,
For eight long years, have nursed our baneful sloth,
And 'neath the darksome clouds we blindly creep.
What saith our conscience? Where is duty found?
We stand all dumb, while icy prudence comes
To stifle anguish by suppressing thought.
The plot doth ripen and the evil grows. . . .
Come, saving Light! Ye days of bloodshed, come!
Let England's Christian sons, stirred by the storm,

Mete out such manhood as the danger needs!
Flash the bright sword, too long in scabbard sheathed!
Build up the scaffold! Light the funeral pile!
And, whilst it burns with inauspicious flame,
Let Albion's sons awake, whose souls are maimed.
Come, come! my lord; let us be Christians still.
'Twere time to put our mettle to the proof!

Cheney. Oh, dread desires!

Camp. Well, ay.

Cheney. Who speaketh thus?
Thou! nursed in peace beneath the studious shade,
Courting sweet rest 'mid wisdom's solitude?
We know thy gentle and refinèd soul,
And yet wouldst challenge the oppressor's sword?
I stand amazed.

Camp. I stand amazed myself!
But, 'mid my grief, what most doth anguish me
Is base equivocation and deceit.
My restless eye shall not be bandaged thus.
It rather seeks the sudden, harmful glare.
I scan the future, and am unprepared.
So long accustomed to my peaceful tasks,
Methinks I was not born for days of strife.
But God is all omnipotent, my lord,
And in my youth I dreamed of martyrdom.
How oft that awful but triumphant fate
With sudden flash disturbed my infant dreams!
Celestial vision, by my sins destroyed!

But once again it stands before mine eyes!
Ah, yes! Amid the plaudits of to-day
I saw that heavenly lightning flash once more.
My eyes did rest upon my Queen's fair hand;
I whispered to myself: "This sovereign palm
Will one day sign the warrant of my death.
More joy will then be mine, through less remorse."

Cheney. Mere whims and fancies that amuse awhile!
Let no such phantoms, Edmund, trouble thee.
Go to; this day foretells far other fate.

Enter WALPOLE, L.

Camp. Walpole!

Wal. Forgive your hasty messenger.
The chancellor——

Cheney. What! Dudley?

Wal. Close at hand.

[*Exit*, R.

Enter DUDLEY, L.

Dud. [*to his suite without*]. Halt there, without!

Camp. [*aside*]. Oh, God!

Dud. The Queen's command
Doth urge me thus to rudely mar your speech.
Thy presence here, my lord, doth gladden me.

[*To* CHENEY.

This royal message will rejoice thee much:
Thou bear'st towards Edmund a paternal love.

Cheney. My lord, I glory in't.

Camp. [*suppressing his anxiety*]. What honour now?

E'en thou to visit *me !*

Dud. I bring thee joy.

Cheney. He doubts it not, my lord.

Dud. Our noble Queen
Doth ask thee by my lips—nay more, doth urge—
That thou do freely say what gracious gift
Her royal bounty shall on thee bestow.
The talents which a reign wakes into life
Adorn that reign. From this day forth
Thy genius, lustrous in its youthful dawn,
Will grace the forehead of Elizabeth
With one more wreath ; and I, at her command,
Must tell thee, in her name, that from henceforth
It doth befit thee seek what boon thou wilt.
Then do but speak. Express thy fondest wish . . .
Thou seem'st confused. Perchance 'tis hard to choose,
And therefore thou dost halt and weigh'st all well.

Camp. My lord, impute my silence to amaze.
O'erwhelmed by so much honour——

Dud. Ah ! I see.
Sometimes is genius blind, nor knows itself.
[*To* CHENEY.
Lend thou, my lord, thine aid, and bid him choose.

Cheney. The Queen doth speak and waiteth thy reply,
Good Edmund.

Camp. May it please Her Royal Grace,
This is the only hope that e'er I nursed,

And God fulfils it; 'tis enough. I choose
To court no other recompense than this:
Unless my wish be ruthlessly betrayed,
My Queen and country may I better serve!

Dud. So nought will overcome thy coy reserve.
Well, well, we leave thee undisturbed to-night.
[*To* CHENEY, *beckoning him to follow.*
So please, a word.

Camp. [*bowing to* DUDLEY]. My lord——

Dud. [*to* CAMPION]. To-morrow, sir.
[*Exit*, L.

Cheney [*eagerly to* CAMPION]. God puts the future,
Edmund, in thy hands. [*Exit*, L.

Camp. [*alone*]. 'Tis true! The dread and sacred hour is nigh,
So long delayed by mine own cowardice.
Away with dreams, and sloth, and careless ease!
At last, God bids me rouse my sleeping will.
By grace I am adjured; by hell provoked.
The step is final, and, if weak my faith,
Anon a golden chain will fetter me.
I'll break the glitt'ring charm that lures my soul;
I'll shun the foe that doth besiege me thus;
I'll snap—but how? By sudden flight alone.
But whither flee? What matter? I'll go hence,
The world is wide enough, and it is God's.
And Walpole! Cheney! What a bitter wound
For him who bears towards me a mother's love!

I'll write to him. [*Writing.*] "In truth, my lord, thou saidst
I build my future; it is exile—death.
Farewell to all thy love, so undeserved.
Farewell!" [*Pausing.*] I sign the warrant of my death.
Ah! coward that I am! This hand doth shake!
I know God's will. My duty is full clear,
And yet mine eye, dismayed, as in a dream,
Doth scan the dread unknown wherein I plunge.
Be still, poor heart, that wouldst betray me thus.
Ye cherished phantoms that assail my soul!
Ye blissful dreams of solitude and peace!
Oh! love unquenched in tranquil search of lore!
Oh! peaceful walls, dumb witnesses of toil!
Belovèd masters! Fellow-students! Friends!
And thou, Fair Name, whose smile was like the dawn!
And oh! chaste Friendship, more enchanting still!
Sweet bonds! 'gainst which my soul is passing frail!
How shall I gather strength? I'll on my knees!
[*Kneeling.*
Oh, God! dispel the charm that haunts me thus.
Fix fast upon Thyself my fluttering will!
He hears my prayer. [*Rising.*] Away! "I sign myself
Thine Edmund, doomed a martyr by God's Will!"
'Tis done! My heart is full of heavenly peace,
And——

Enter WALPOLE, L.

Camp. Ah!

Wal. Forgive me. Sorrow bids me come.
Thou'rt ill at ease. In grief!

Camp. Alas! dear friend!

Wal. Wilt thou no more than half confide in me?
What ails thee? Answer, and dispel my dread.

Camp. [*aside*]. I did not think to see him thus in tears.

Wal. Oh, speak! Has prudence failed me till this hour?

Camp. Well, well. For three short days, swear secrecy.
I've ne'er a doubt of thy fidelity,
But 'tis a solemn moment.

Wal. Yes, I swear.
And yet I tremble. Thy unwonted mien . . .

Camp. Come, let me fold thee in one last embrace.

Wal. Oh, God!

Camp. Remember well this last adieu.
God sees how much it costs my tender love.

Wal. Dost flee?

Camp. E'en so.

Wal. To-morrow?

Camp. No, to-night.

Wal. And whither, pray?

Camp. I wot not; God doth guide.

Wal. What! Hence? Ah, never. 'Tis a fatal dream.

Camp. I go. My lord of Gloucester will explain;
Give him this letter when three days have passed.
Wal. No, no. I will not. I will call for help,
And we, perforce, will keep thee——
Camp. And thy word?
Wal. Alas, mine oath!
Camp. [*after a pause*]. May Heaven console thee, friend.
At this dread hour, I suffer more than thou.
Wal. What urges thee?
Camp. My very faith's at stake.
The Church of England is the work of man,
And I seek Christ.
Wal. Where dwelleth He?
Camp. In Rome.
Wal. A papist! Thou!
Camp. As thou wilt be, anon.
Wal. Is this a dream? My master, whom I loved,
To yield his soul to such idolatry!
Camp. I lose my prospects, peace, and native land,
And must I lose thy love? Doth God ask this?
Dost hate me, friend?
Wal. [*embracing him*]. I pity thee. [*A pause.*]
Camp. [*gently forcing him away*]. Adieu!
[*Exit* CAMPION, R. WALPOLE *sinks into a chair.*

END OF PROLOGUE.

ACT I.

SCENE.

The Tower of London. House of Lieutenant HOPTON. *Courtyard looking on to the entrance of the Tower.*

TIME, 22*nd July*, 1581.

Enter TILNEY *and* TRESHAM, R.

Tresh. There's no one by. Come, Tilney.
Til. Guard us, Heaven!
Tresh. The sad procession needs must pass this way.
Here will we stand and view the mournful scene.
Til. [*dejectedly*]. So, Campion is within their grasp at last.
But, Tresham, how dost dare to lead me thus
To Hopton's house?
Tresh. I knew his foible well,
And played upon't. To render him stone-blind
A little gold's enough.
Til. Good!
Tresh. Better still,
His son's for us.
Til. His son!
Tresh. But not a word!

This Hopton values self far more than sect.
His soul's concern scarce troubles him at all.
But Charles, four months ago, impelled by grace,
And secretly won o'er by Campion's self,——

Til. Indeed!

Tresh. In all the warmth of his new faith,
Became the captive's angel guardian.

Til. Oh! Providence! But how? No peering eye . . .?

Tresh. His prayers are so far heard, and all goes well.

They trust the father, but o'erlook the son.
The father, full reliant on the past,
Still deems his son a right good heretic;
And Cecil, unawares, hath, in advance,
Granted to this same worthy renegade
The sure reversion of his father's place.

Til. What timely succour for our ill-starred friends!

Tresh. Ay. God reveals Himself in these sad days.

Virtue and vice are ofttimes strangely mixed,
And angels elbow Satan and his horde.

Til. But, Tresham, why doth God such woe permit?
A captive! Campion!

Tresh. Hold! here come our friends,
Catesby and Fitton. Charles is leading them.

Enter CHARLES HOPTON, CATESBY, *and* FITTON, L.

Fitt. Oh! woful sight! Oh! monstrous cruelty!
Have you beheld him, sirs?

Til. No, Fitton, no.

Cates. This saintly priest, this second Chrysostom,
This shining light, our country's foremost pride,
Is made the sport of all the vulgar mob.

Fitt. The vilest retinue encircles him.

Cates. Through all the crossways he is slowly dragged.

Fitt. His woe and his disgrace are fathomless.
To virtue, talent, is all honour due;
Nor must they be upheld by shameless deeds
To insolent contempt of all that's great.

Tresh. Cecil is cold, and full of spleenful hate,
A hangman's lackey and a laughing-stock.

Cates. He would degrade us, ere he cut our throats.

Til. Outrage may make us quail, but not so death.

Charles. Remember Christ and the prætorium.
Good Campion doth walk in Jesus' steps.

Fitt. Ay, outraged by the mob—by soldiers, too.
There lacketh nought.

Tresh. There's e'en a Judas in't.
To play the traitor's part was Elliott born.

Cates. Yet Campion was his tutor, I believe,
At Oxford.

Tresh. No. Though schooled along with us,
The jealous youth presaged the future fiend.
The fellow is a model of all crime:
Vice, shame, and woe have slowly made of him

A handy tool for base sectarian craft.

Til. 'Tis true.

Fitt. They say that, in that guilty hour,
When he did hunt his prey in Lyford's walls,
The soldiers deemed him an escapèd fiend,
And stood aghast at having such a chief.

Charles. Oh, fearful sight! This Elliott spurs them on;
But vain his threats, and gibes, and violence.
The day goes by and they discover nought.
The fiend desists, departs: all, all is safe.
Ah, foolish hope! Too soon inflamed again,
This Judas starts afresh his bloody work.
Again he comes, impelled by hell-born rage,
And with an iron bar sounds every wall,
Peers into ev'ry nook, breaks down, destroys.
The whole night long he seeks his direful end;
But nothing. Sad and hideous to behold,
The foilèd traitor yields to his despair.
Lo! he departs, when, hark! a shriek of joy
Bursts forth abruptly from his parchèd lips,
And one more blow reveals his helpless prey!
A moment, and heroic Campion
Stands calmly forth before the traitor's eyes;
While Elliott, o'er-elated with success,
Delivers him to torture and to death.
Angels of heav'n!

Fitt. Oh, God! And couldst look on?

Til. Didst say to death? Delivered him to death?

Can this be so?

Charles. I read their frenzy thus.

Cates. Too keenly hath he stung vain heresy.

Tresh. Ay, ay. A year, victorious and unseen,
He hurled his shafts deep to its inmost heart.

Til. But policy doth sometimes bridle hate.
To-morrow doth Anjou espouse our Queen:
He must be moved to beg our father's life.

Charles [*dejected and doubtful*].
They cry for blood.

Fitt. But who dares shed it, pray?

Charles. Put little trust, good Fitton, in Anjou.

Fitt. And will the Queen give to this child of France
A hand still reddened with a martyr's blood?

Til. And would a son of great St. Louis yield?

Cates. But that son's mother was de'Médici.
Enough.

Fitt. Well, be it hope or fancy, sirs,
We will do all we may.

Til. We'll see Anjou,
And he must guard his honour in the suit.

Charles. And if, perchance, he seal th' Apostle's fate?

Tresh. Then must we tickle puritanic greed.

Cates. We are not yet undone with pains and fines:
We'll ransom Campion, nor count the cost.

Tresh. A hateful and revengeful law, my friends,
Is dragging Catholics to want and woe.

Three short years hence, and on some broad highway
The heir of all my race will beg his bread.
Ah! well; God speed that great but awful day.
I gladly sacrifice what wealth remains.

Fitt. E'en be it so, since Campion must be saved.

Cates. And thou, good Charles, wilt not reject thy part.

Thy name, the secret that o'ershadows thee,
All serve thee to give aid in this great cause.

Charles. Let God but aid my will——

[*Alarum without.*

Til. [*at the window*]. The gate flies back!
A brave procession comes into the Tower.

[*All look out.*

Fitt. The archers and the pages of the court!

Tresh. The Earl of Leicester!

Fitt. Why, what would he here?

Til. Who follows him?

Tresh. His chaplain, Walpole; he
Who was a pupil once of Campion's.

Fitt. And what can bring this pupil to the Tower?

Cates. Perchance, 'tis pity.

Fitt. Catesby, so I hope.

Charles. Come hence, away! I see my father near.

Avoid his glance, my friends. 'Twere best to go.
We'll meet again amid the martyr's train.

[*Exeunt* R. *and* L., TILNEY, TRESHAM, FITTON, CATESBY.

Charles [*alone*]. Martyr! So soon! That word
sounds like a knell.
In breathing it, I quake, despite myself,
Who am his gaoler here, by Heav'n's decree.
God is my guide.

Enter LEICESTER, WALPOLE, HOPTON, L.

Wal. [*entering. To* LEICESTER.]
My lord, this is too much.
His punishment doth far outweigh his fault.

Hop. His crime!

Wal. No, Hopton. Boldly I say no!
He is not charged with crime against the state.
A foolish scruple hath unhinged his faith;
But he doth love his country far too well
To barter it to craft of foreign courts.
Full well I know his tender, loyal heart.
I'll answer for't.

Leic. Would I could think as thou.
I held him once full high in my esteem.

[HOPTON *whispers to* CHARLES. *Exit* CHARLES, R.

Wal. My lord, he is no traitor. He's befooled;
He's stricken blind. Unless I dare too much,
I'll stake my fair repute on righting him.

Leic. Thou?

Wal. So I dream.

Leic. And think'st it possible?

Wal. And wherefore not, my lord?

Leic. He's obstinate.

Hop. Defied he not our learnèd doctors all?

Wal. I know't too well. That bold, untruthful sect,
Which with the name of Jesus is bedecked,
Breathes in the hearts of all its votaries
A wayward pride—a haughty, headstrong will.
To these false prophets is good Campion bound.
But I believe not that their skilful lies
Have thus far tampered with his loyalty,
Or that, puffed up with knowledge, vain and false,
He shuns the glorious rays of shining truth.

Leic. Then speak to him, and may he gently yield.

Wal. But, for so great a task, I need some aid.
My lord of Gloucester——

Leic. Gloucester, dost thou say?

Hop. Nay, he's in exile.

Wal. On my very knees,
I will implore the mercy of the Queen
On Gloucester, exiled for a transient fault.

Leic. He dared resist the council's stern decrees.

Hop. His punishment was just.

Wal. No doubt, sir—none,
But all the wrong that he doth expiate
Is far removed in space: and one may wish
That, his grave error being quite condoned,
Our Campion be restored by him—to faith.
Alone will Cheney gain this longed-for end.
Vast is the prize for such a victory.

Leic. Well, well, I'll see to't, friend.

Wal. Oh! glorious day,

When Campion shall exclaim: "I was deceived;
Yield ye obedience to your country's laws".

Leic. Ay, England would thereby win more than one.

Wal. Have we not seen the partisans of Rome,
Sad and dejected in their solitude,
Come slowly towards the Church Established?

Hop. True, true.

Wal. What energy—these ten months past—
Moves and is seen within their conquered ranks!
What charm withholds the backward course of men?
What haughty threats resound in broadest day!
We sniff the breeze that bodes the coming storm,
And Campion's hand is foremost in the work.

Hop. Then, is he dangerous. Why spare him, pray?

Enter CECIL, L., *unobserved, except by* HOPTON, *on whom he enjoins silence by a gesture.*

Wal. Because, in gaining him, we shall gain all.
Such is the glorious end, by fate decreed:
Entice the shepherd, and he leads his flock.
To-morrow let him own the Queen's due rights,
And on our foreheads shall no wrinkle be.

Leic. It may be so, and so I'd fain believe.
But what firm pledge canst offer of success?

Wal. To win his mind I reckon on his heart.
I will but twine together in one wreath
The master's friendship and the pupil's love:

With Cheney's aid, then all is won.

Cecil [*coming forward*]. Perchance.

Wal. [*aside*]. What! Cecil!

Leic. Ah! so thou art here, my lord!

Cecil [*smiling*]. I must be everywhere, and so I'm here. [*Sitting near* LEICESTER.

Moreover, thou'lt agree that here's my place,
And such a captive!

Leic. Ay.

Wal. [*aside*]. My blood runs cold.

Cecil. [*to all*]. You spoke of Cheney. I too thought of him.

[*To* WALPOLE.

Without intent, I have surprised thy schemes.

Wal. I hide them not, my lord.

Cecil. I praise them, faith.
But oft our plans are foiled in their results,
And I do fear —— [*Shouting without.*

Leic. [*rising*]. What means yon shout?
Methinks there's some unruly mob abroad.

Cecil [*unmoved*]. 'Tis Campion. Hopton, see thou guard the gate.
Thyself receive the traitor and his train;
And for the rest debar all entrance here.
Dost heed?

Hop. I'll run, my lord. [*Exit*, L.

Cecil [*walking about*]. The haughty Pope
[LEICESTER *and* WALPOLE *at the windows.*
Shall this day have a salutary check.

A curse on all the foes of this free land!

Leic. They come.

Wal. [*seeing* CAMPION]. Ah! there he is.

Cecil [*without looking*]. Seems he abashed?

Leic. No, no.

Cecil. His pride is clad in virtue's garb.

Wal. And must I see him bound in those dread chains?

Cecil. Dost pity him?

Wal. He was my tutor once,
And, good my lord, methinks my former love
May sanction some compassion for him now.
His fate I pity, but I hate his fault.

Leic. [*to* CECIL]. Let them unbind him ere they lead him in;
I sicken at the sight.

Cecil. Well, be it so. [*To* WALPOLE.
Bid Hopton loose his chains. [*Exit* WALPOLE, L.

Cecil [*aside*]. Ye tender hearts!
'Tis my turn now.

Enter R., TRESHAM, TILNEY, FITTON, CATESBY. *They stand astonished on seeing* CECIL.

Cecil. Why stand you gazing thus?
Come on and share with me the festival—
Since festival it is for all true men.
Come on. [*Aside.*] But how is this?
[*Aside to* LEICESTER *at the window.*] Observe, my lord,
They seem afeard.

Leic. [*aside to* CECIL]. Mayhap they're recusants.
Is not that Catesby?

Cecil [*aside to* LEICESTER]. Ay, methinks it is.
And Tresham, Tilney, Fitton——

Leic. [*aside to* CECIL]. Papists all!

Enter HOPTON, L.

Hop. My lords, the prisoner.

Cecil. Then lead him in.

Exit HOPTON, L., *re-entering with* CAMPION, CHARLES, ELLIOTT. *The latter in disguise among the soldiers of the escort.* LEICESTER *and* CECIL *are seated*, R. *The Catholics are grouped*, L. CAMPION, C. CHARLES *and soldiers behind.*

Camp. [*to the two lords*]. My lords, I thank you for your clemency
In loosing for a while my irksome bonds.
Methought I should be put to torture here.
Pray, pardon; 'twas unjust, for I perceive
The kindly smile wherewith you welcome me.
My gracious Cecil——

Cecil. Prythee, keep thy thanks.

Camp. At least, I thank my God. For, now at length,
The happy past breaks on me, all at once.
My lord of Leicester. . . . What! and, once again,
I see thee here, whom, in thy boyhood's days,
I knew so well—now come to manhood's years,
My dearest Walpole!——

Wal. Peace! Full well thou know'st
How deeply I do loathe a Romish priest.
Thyself I loved, but I do hate thy sin.
Camp. But how can I forget the courtesy
That singled out thy hand to loose my chains?
Nay, God Himself, Who willed this kindly deed,
Doth set some happy portent in the choice.
Cecil. Enough! Enough! Are we such silly babes
That we may be decoyed by honied words?
Leic. Thou hast no friend among true Englishmen.
Camp. What have I done, my lord, to lose them all?
Cecil. What? Thou! who com'st, a traitor doubly damned,
To stir up discord and relentless hate
Against thy country and thy country's Queen;
Craft in thy heart—and dagger in thy hand!
Leic. Art not the envoy of the Pope of Rome?
That is thy crime.
Cecil. Speak out! a truce to lies!
Camp. The hour is not yet come to meet my judge,
And still, my lords, in all sincerity,
I'll speak the truth to whomso seeketh it.
I am ordained of Rome. This is my joy—
My glory, too. But God doth witness this,
That he who bade me come, the Pope of Rome—
Our universal father, who doth count
E'en you among his well-belovèd sons,
[CECIL *and* LEICESTER *show impatience*

Has armed me with no sword, but with the cross.
Cecil. Hast thou yet torn that haughty papal brief,
Which curseth our great Queen's high sovereignty?
Leic. And which would make a duty of revolt?
Camp. I knelt before St. Peter's successor,
Ere leaving him, my lord, and breathed this prayer,
That English Catholics might e'er be bound
To render due allegiance to their Queen.
Cecil. And so this champion of crownèd heads
Would graciously permit us to be leal!
Leic. Oh, wonderful!
Camp. You have my treason now.
Is it for this you bolt my prison doors?
Cecil [*enraged*]. Foul traitor, thou! Unless thy damn'd intent
Be pointed full against our sovereign Queen,
Why lead this vagrant, skulking life of thine?
Leic. Why thy false names?—thy heed to live unseen?
Cecil. Virtue doth walk erect; she loves the light.
Camp. Why did I hide? What fault was that of mine?
If Truth must walk erect, oh! then, my lords,
Be not so cruel; and straightway destroy
The bloody edicts that affright her so.
But once set free the holy word of God;
Throw wide these gates, and I will hasten forth
Through all the streets, by which I hither came.
In sight of all who sit in darkness there,

I'll hold erect my head—unfold my heart,
Which pants to blazon forth the truth of Rome.
Nay, more, bid come the champions of your Church,
Free from all wrath, like truly Christian men,
To hold dispute within the sight of all;
And let Her Royal Grace herself preside.
Then she, my lords, and you, and all the court
Shall know if what I preach do shun the light.

Cecil. Thy challenge stands but level with thy pride.

Leic. Come, let this day at least see thee subdued.
Art not ashamed to be thus manacled?
And, after all the insults heaped on thee,
'Mid this display of hate and infamy,
What pride yet lurks unconquered in thy soul,
That, on the eve of such a rueful day,
Undaunted, thou dost venture to launch forth
These threats which needs must earn God's chastisement?

Camp. God's truth alone breathes courage in my soul.
The people have been prodigal of hate:
The live-long day I've quaffed dishonour's cup;
Yet, in the dregs I've found some little cheer.
[*To* CECIL]. Thou didst intend thy mandate to be keen,
And I have trod the path of Calvary;
But, all day long, the light of faith revealed
My Jesus meekly walking on before.

And wouldst, forsooth, desire that mere disgrace
Should crush me to the earth, or anger me?
And wherefore? No! without a single pang,
Before my God, I gladly pardon all
Who wished to wither me with scorching shame,
And all who fondly hoped to see me die. [*A pause.*

Ell. [*coming forward from the group of soldiers*].
And wilt thou gladly pardon even me?

Wal. What! Elliott here!

Tresh. Foul traitor!

Fitt. Miscreant!

Leic. [*aside. To* CECIL.] Didst bid him come?
Falls this by thy command?

Cates. Oh! Judas!

Til. Judas!

Tresh. Ay, a Judas thou!

Cecil [*furiously*]. Who speaks?

Tresh. [*advancing*]. 'Tis Tresham.

Cecil. Thou! What, ho! the guard!

[*The soldiers step forward and surround the Catholics.*

Camp. [*interposing. To the Catholics.*] Forbear, my friends.

Cates. Shame on the traitor! shame!

Camp. Perchance repentance moves his troubled soul.

Cecil. Our country's cause excludes repentance, sir.

'Tis *thou* who hast betrayed *us*, Campion.

Camp. God is my witness,—No! [*To* ELLIOTT].
I pardon thee:
Go hence. [*Exit* ELLIOTT, L., *in silence.*
Now all is o'er. [*To* CECIL.] I yield to thee
My lord. My errant life doth this day cease.
I can no more than vainly nurse my hopes.
Thy hand is on me. Be it kind or rude,
Without a pang of care I welcome it.
Tis that——

Cecil. [*to the soldiers, pointing to* CAMPION]. Away with him!

Leic. His hour is come!

Camp. [*withdrawing*]. Think kindly of your hapless captive, friends.

Tresh. Oh! break, my heart!

[*Exeunt* CAMPION, L., *with* CHARLES *and soldiers.*

Cecil. [*to the Catholics.*] Now, if it be your wish
To play a part, good sirs, in yonder show,
I'll not withstand your laudable desire.
I rest content, and Hopton has your names.
I'll watch you well. Adieu!

Cates [*aside*]. We understand.
[*Exeunt Catholics,* L.

Leic. [*to* WALPOLE]. So, Walpole, thou'lt subdue this wayward soul?
[CECIL *whispers to* HOPTON.

Wal. The task is passing difficult, I know,
And yet I hope——

Leic. [*to* CECIL]. The court-ball, what of that,
My lord?

Cecil. I'll join you at the Tower-gate.
Adieu! [*Exeunt* LEICESTER *and* WALPOLE, L.

Hop. The earl befriends this captive priest.

Cecil. Ay, marry, but we'll set a trap for him,
And Campion soon shall lose that sorry prop.

Hop. But how?

Cecil. Let Anjou plead, and 'tis enough.
The jealous Leicester straight will umbrage take,
And then the sword will to its bloody work.

Hop. The sword? Art sure?

Cecil. At least 'tis so desired.
'Twere perilous that he go uncondemned.

Hop. Then, dost thou hope to frustrate Walpole's end?

Cecil. Why, no. But think not that I'll favour it.

Hop. But will not Cheney lend him ready aid?

Cecil. I doubt it. Justice must speed on apace.

Hop. I'll act upon the trust reposed in me,
My lord; and Campion——

Cecil. I trust thy wits.

Hop. Must I induce him to acknowledge all
That we can safely use to prove his guilt?

Cecil. We first must filch him of his good repute.

Hop. Ay, ay.

Cecil. Set thy supremest skill therein.
And can I trust thy son?

Hop. E'en as myself,
I warrant thee.

Cecil. 'Tis well. Act both as one.
The Queen rewards good service lavishly.

Hop. Ay, marry.

Cecil. To avenge her upon Rome,
Devise a means to compass his disgrace;
And know that in thy hands the Queen doth place
The bravest champion of her boldest foes.

[*Exeunt*, L.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.

Tower of London. First floor of Beauchamp Tower. Gothic Hall. Door opening on to a staircase, L.U.E. *Door of Campion's dungeon,* R.U.E. *Large window at back looking on to the interior court of the Tower.*

Enter HOPTON *and* CHARLES.

Charles. And so thou think'st that Elliott watches us?

Hop. Go to: I know yon Cecil. 'Twere not strange,
If some vile hidden spy do dog *my* steps,—
Some unseen vampire, clinging to my thighs.
Perchance hath Elliott his; but what of that?
How can he foil our deepest interests?
Of late, we've served this Cecil but too well.
Have I not kept the plan traced out for me?
Already Campion hath betrayed his friends.
What we have learned of their conspiracy,
They, in despair, impute to his rash words.
Indeed, I have o'ertopped my master's wish.
Give ear. I must confer with him to-day

Anent these last he sends unto the Tower.

Charles. What! Tilney, Tresham, Fitton?

Hop. Ay, poor fools;
They deem themselves denounced by Campion.
I go. The prisoner remains with thee.
Let this alone be thy concern, my son;
Take heed thou keep him in good watch and ward.

Charles. If Walpole come?——

Hop. [*after some hesitation*]. Well, *he* may speak with him.
'Tis Leicester's wish, and better be it so.
Ay, let the chaplain with the captive speak;
And let him preach, and preach, and preach again.
There's Tyburn and the gallows ready still.

[*Exit*, L.

Charles [*alone*]. He goes. He must be absent full three hours.
Three hours! What then? Oh! woful impotence!
To seize on Campion,—drag him in my steps,—
And rescue him from death! He would not so.
Then I'll remain, and be his gaoler still.
A sorry part to play! Oh! dreadful dream,
Begotten and prolonged by miracle!
To strike a tyrant, tho' I be his slave!
To smite a sland'rer, tho' he be my sire!

[*Turning towards Campion's dungeon.*

Oh! blessèd martyr! would that, even now,
I could but rescue thee from calumny!
Thy constancy is ev'rywhere defamed.

By torture bruised, nigh me thou pinest here,
While other captives, brethren in the Faith,
Deceived by lies begot of heretics,
Bewail, hard by, thy base apostasy:
And I lack speech to undeceive them on't,
And as for thee—— Great God! he must not know.
Oh! do Thou spare him this deep gash at least:
'Twould be his death.

He opens dungeon and leads forth CAMPION.

Charles. Come! come! the hour is safe:
And here the air is free;—the scene, less sad.

Camp. [*walking with difficulty, and leaning on* CHARLES' *arms; his wrists manacled*].
My blessing on thee, Charles, for all thy love.

Charles. Nay, nay, 'tis nought.

Camp. [*sitting*]. Judge rightly of thyself.
Do I not owe to thee that happiest boon
Of having here the greatest gift of Heav'n,—
My Saviour, 'neath the Sacramental veil?
Already, through thy holy friendship's care,
Four times hath He passed through the tower-gates,
And, even now, He bideth there with me.
[*Looking towards the dungeon door, which is half open.*
Yes, there! and, by His Presence, doth He make
A glorious Thabor of my prison-house.
Thou dost believe, and so thy Faith doth teach,
What joy God's Presence to thy captive yields.
For, through the darkness of that dread abode,
The brightest rays of Heav'n shine sweetly forth,

And, full of God, the long days gently glide.
And when, perforce, to torture I was led,
When nature well-nigh yielded to affright,
That God, Who lay concealed within my breast,
Kept safe the secrets they would rob me of.

Charles [*aside*]. Alas!

Camp. Yes! 'mid the tortures of the rack,
Doth God pour down delights unspeakable.
And thy kind hands to me have ministered
This guerdon of sweet grace and happiness.
May He discharge my debt; 'tis great indeed.

Charles. I know not what God's Will doth work in me;
But, when I gaze on Christ, unseen of men,
Placed by His priest in my unworthy hands,
My soul is filled with restless eagerness;
I dare to think of still a higher fate,
And, bearing Love's sweet Victim nigh my heart,
I yearn to offer Him to God myself.

Camp. Be hopeful.

Charles. How? The vision vanisheth.
A deeper voice bids me forget the dream,
And warns me that, anon, will Death draw near,
And that my useless part will be played out.

Camp. What say'st thou? Death! May he retard his steps.
Thou must stand by me to my latest hour,
To bring once more, ere I breathe forth my soul,
The martyr's food,—the sweet Viaticum.

My trusty friend,—my Heav'n-sent comforter,
Thou helpmate of my waning pilgrimage,
[*Drawing* CHARLES *near to him, and, with deep emotion, pointing to the half-open dungeon door.*
'Tis He Whom I should lose, in losing thee.
And shall I say that; ever and anon,
I fear thy ardent zeal, and tremble lest
Some fatal and irreparable haste——
Charles. But how prolong the hateful part I play?
Dissembling ever;—ever calm, though grieved!
My visage hidden 'neath a brazen mask,
Tho' barely twenty summers have I seen!
When Cecil tortures thee upon the rack,
And doth begrime thy limbs with foulsome earth,
When policy doth dabble in thy blood,
Canst tell what horror doth encompass me?
Oh! God! how vile the world,—how mean is man!
See'st thou this Leicester here, of honoured name,
Yet with a heart deep sunk in infamy?
Though but a subject, he o'er-rules the Queen,
And inwardly, forsooth, he pities thee:
But, learning Anjou's wish to lend thee aid,
The jealous earl withdraws, and bids thee die.
Ah! such is man! And God Himself betrays
To this vile trafficking the souls He loves!
Why barter thus the lot of His elect?
Why thus suspend it by a slender thread?
Camp. Forbear.

Charles. And why?
Camp. Thy grief unseats thy mind.
Forget thou Leicester, Cecil, and the Queen.
Look up to God, but see thou wrong Him not.
'Mid this dark chaos,—'mid these loathsome schemes,
Discern the Hand that weaves my lasting crown.
With foulest craft doth hate encircle me.
What then? I see afar the dawn appear,
And Hate, by Murder, does the work of Love.
Ah! woe to him, whose hand is on the plough,
And yet who casts one erring glance behind.
My task is o'er; my earthly course is run.
I do remember, when I stepped ashore
At Dover, whence 'mid perils I have walked,
"One year," I cried to God, in silent joy—
"One year for conquest in Thy glorious cause!
Then, welcome sacrifice and victory!
'Mid toils I live,—by immolation, die!"
That year hath quickly sped, and death is near.
But, in the bloodstained furrow I have ploughed,
Will others see th' undying harvest reaped.
For me the day declines, and rest is nigh.
Though he that soweth doth not always reap,
The reaper and the sower share the fruits.
Charles [*looking into the court*]. There's Walpole!
Camp. Well. And cometh he to us?
I have expected him this many a day.
Charles. How slow his pace! Methinks he tarrieth.

Camp. Poor soul! he hoped to make me err with him;
And, at the thought, I know not what to do,
And doubt if I should smile or shed a tear.
Charles. Nay, prythee, catch him in his own fine web.
Camp. Oh! would that I could cherish such a hope!
The recompense would far outweigh my grief.
[*Looking towards the dungeon.*
Oh! God! could I but lead him back to Thee!
Charles. The task is well in hand, and makes good way.
Camp. [*as before*]. 'Tis true. But, Jesus, I do need Thine aid.
Charles. No more he deems our faith idolatrous.
What still withholds him, pray?
Camp. His country's pride,
Which, he believes, can hold no truce with Rome.
Charles. But God will end what God Himself began.
Camp. [*looking towards the dungeon*].
Two graces more! His soul,—my martyrdom.
Charles [*listening at the door of the staircase*]. He comes. [*Withdrawing.*] Allow me to retire within.
Camp. Within my dungeon!
Charles. I would fain adore
My captive Jesus, dwelling there with thee.

Camp. Well, well.

Enter WALPOLE, L., *preceded by the guard.*

Charles [*to* WALPOLE]. Come in. Wouldst while away an hour?

[*He dismisses the guard, and enters Campion's dungeon, leaving the door half-open.*]

Camp. My generous friend, thine angel guideth thee
Unto my darksome prison-house once more.
Thrice kindly deed! What joy I owe to him!
And yet, I look for better gifts besides.
Is sacred Truth, whom Honesty doth woo,—
Is Light, is Faith,—the dower of Christian souls,
Unmoved by such sweet intercourse as this?
Thou lov'st her, Walpole, and thy faithful love
Doth nothing dread so much, as lest thou be
Condemned to live too far removed from her.
With proud, unflinching eye thou canst behold
The chains I bear,—the death that waiteth me.
[*A pause.*
But in thy looks I read constraint and grief.
Believe me, Henry——

Wal. [*with effort*]. Sir, no more pretence.
Too well I know whate'er hath come to pass.
'Tis thine no longer to address me thus.

Camp. Oh! Walpole!

Wal. Yes, I suffer,—I confess.
And shame doth fill my spirit to the brim,
Encrimsoning my cheeks with deepest dye.

Camp. Shame?

Wal. Yes; I blush,—I weep. It must be so.
Alas! thou stood'st so high in my esteem.
I loved thy courage,—while condemning thee.
That sovereign calm, with which thou bravedst the storm.
That apostolic, persecuted mien
Engendered in my soul a wonderous pride.
I hoped to vanquish thee; such was my boast;
But thy indignant soul would fain have scorned
To think an abject rival e'er should bear
The palm of such a conquest over thee.

Camp. A rival! Thou! I know not what thou wouldst.

Wal. [*exultingly*]. Thou must have yielded, 'sooth, to wholesome fear.

Camp. Yield! Yield! I've yielded! say they so?

Wal. A thousand times I've heard it, these ten days,
Wherefore protest? It is no mystery;
I know it well. All London knows it too.
Nay, throughout England has the tale gone forth.

Camp. Oh! God!

Wal. Thou wilt abjure, and leave the Tower.
It but remains to fix the very day.
Thou comest back to Truth,—but through disgrace;
And hence my grief.

Camp. [*calmly*]. 'Tis false; 'tis basely false!
Yield! Never!

Wal. Say'st thou so? The proofs are clear—
Those plots—through fear revealed to Cecil's ears.
Camp. I've nought revealed.
Wal. Thy papist brethren here,
Those generous friends, though nobly rash indeed,
Whom I beheld in chains and hither led—
Poor Tresham, Tilney, Fitton—
Camp. They in chains!
Wal. Nay, didst not know? And yet it was thy word
That did betray and yield them up to death.
They know full well who hath impeached them thus.
Camp. What say'st? What say'st? So they were made believe——
Enough, good Walpole. Hold! Enough! enough!
At last, I dimly see this hellish plot. [*A pause.*
Twice have they tortured me upon the rack;
But I do call on God—my Judge—and theirs,
To witness what I now in truth declare:
These hands—fast bound by grief unspeakable—
Are innocent of this most monstrous crime.
These lips—close sealèd by the holiest law—
Have kept the secrets trusted to mine ears.
Wal. Can this be so?
Camp. Am I a perjurer?
Wal. [*hesitating*]. Why—sir——
Camp. I would endure this piercing wrong,
But I am seized with horror and affright

At this most fatal error of my friends.

[*Looking towards the dungeon; then, continuing with increased emotion.*

Thou bad'st me, Lord, their courage to sustain,
And, lo! they weep o'er mine own cowardice.
The name they loved, and which they now must hate,
Will be to them henceforth, O God! a plea
For their betrayal e'en of Thee Thyself.
Their own apostle is a living lie!
O God! O God! to what a dread abyss
My reason headlong rushes—goaded on
By such foul craft and cruel knavery!
At last the poison sinks into my heart!
At last I yield!

Wal. [*aside*]. May not this grief be feigned?
Where must I pause? How far must I believe?
Abyss unto abyss!

Camp. [*recovering*]. The more I think,
The less can I submit to this vile snare.
Then perish this frail frame by fire or sword!
My name be dragged for ever in the mire!
Still, Sovereign Lord, Thy glory I'll avenge.
I must defend Thee, and lend fitting aid
To those pure souls, through me condemned to die.
Their father, I! And shall my loudest cries
Be stifled unto death in these cold walls?
Wilt not permit me plead my children's cause,
Before their braggart executioners?

Wal. Be calm.

Camp. If thou have any pity left,
Become to them a heavenly messenger;
Go,—see them,—tell them they have been deceived;
In God's name, Walpole, I adjure thee!
Wal. Me!
[*Charles suddenly throws wide the dungeon-door.*
Charles [*to* WALPOLE].
Dost tarry, sir? Myself will lead the way.
Cam. [*alarmed*]. Oh! Charles!
Wal. What! we were heard!
Charles [*tauntingly, to* WALPOLE.]
Dost fear some harm?
Wal. [*recovering from his surprise*].
No. But if all be false, thy father lied.
Go, tell them this thyself.
Charles [*exultingly*]. Come! courage, sir!
Camp. [*imploringly*]. Hold! Charles!
Charles. Such grief would melt a heart of stone
But son must mend what sire hath foully marred.
[*To* WALPOLE, *pointing to* CAMPION.
And thou, whose hands have steeped his soul in gall,
Shalt answer for't. [*Exit hastily by the staircase.*
Wal. What meaneth he?
Camp. Great Heav'n!
Recall him, Walpole. I do deeply dread
His rash intent!
Wal. [*going to the staircase*].
He's out of call. He runs.

Camp. Would Providence, at one fell stroke, avenge
Those cries my grief could hardly keep in check?
Wal. My mind is in amaze at all I hear.
But has this fellow's soul been bartered thus?
Camp. My woes concern him much, as thou hast seen;
But one may pity, nor in duty fail.
How could I bargain for his favour, sir?
From me, poor captive, what could he obtain?
What store of bribes is mine to dazzle him?
No, Walpole, no; I traffic not in souls,
Unless they're bought with apostolic blood,—
As God with mine will one day ransom thine.
Wal. Think'st so?
Camp. Ay, ever.
Wal. More than ever, then,—
Camp. Henry, forbear,—for I do promise thee,
My blood, which they will shed, shall flow for thee.
This sovereign charm disarmeth God Himself.
And thou?——
Wal. [*deeply moved*]. No! no! Live on!
Camp. I bid thine eyes
Be witnesses of this vile treachery.
My fall is falsely rumoured far and wide,
And whilst I suffer, helpless to deny,—
But why speak thus? The falsehood undiscerned,
They call me renegade, and perjured spy!
Twice have I conquered mortal agony;

Now, calumny doth supersede the rack.
God saved me from the tiger—here's the snake,
Which lurks, and crawls, and, crawling, killeth me.
Deeds have a tongue—a voice of wondrous power.
Is this the Truth which they do thus defend?
Is this God's Faith that shows herself to man,
Her lips defiled with lies, her hands with blood?
How say'st?

Wal. I blush that she is armèd thus;
But, therefore, to forsake her would be base.
Amongst her suitors, what can lies avail?
Beneath this cloak of shame, that Faith is Truth;
And so, this shame engages me the more
To love and honour her.

Camp. I know thy drift,
And Cheney, once at Oxford, argued thus,
Unhappy soul!

Wal. Thyself didst then give ear.

Camp. Alas!

Wal. Indeed, the exile shall return.
His dying voice will more avail than mine.

Camp. And may God bless thy hazardous intent.

Wal. Is this thy prayer?

Camp. E'en so. To win you both.

Enter CHARLES, L., *followed by the prisoners* TRESHAM, TILNEY, FITTON.

Charles. Come in, see, speak, make haste: the hour speeds on.

Camp. O Charles, what hast thou done?
Charles. Few words with me.
Let these men learn the truth from thine own lips.
Tresh. [*pointing to* WALPOLE]. Before that man?
Charles. Ay, Walpole hates deceit.
Like you, he longs to see it all laid bare.
Til. No, no, another snare to tangle us!
Fitt. Then, not a word.
Wal. My presence you mistrust.
I go.
Charles [*stopping him by a gesture*]. Too late.
[*To the Catholics.*] He knoweth all. Proceed.
Our heads are all at stake, save his alone.
Our time is precious. Speak, what hinders you?
[*Locking the stair-case door.*
Camp. They deem themselves betrayed. Their downcast eyes,
Their silence, all doth plainly argue so.
Unfold the truth, O Lord, and let my lips
Breathe one enlightening word, one moving prayer.
Tresh. We need good proof, sir, of thine innocence.
Charles. Will not the proof of blood alone suffice?
Examine close those lacerated hands,
Those hands twice mangled by the cruel rack.
Fitt. [*gloomily*]. We know all that.
Charles. Then, trust a martyr's word.

Til. At first, he suffered; then, through fear, he lied.

Wal. What protestation would you that he make?

Til. He hath betrayed us. We know nought besides.

Camp. Ah! never! never! Must I swear to that?

Tresh. [*despairingly*]. If he betrayed us, he can falsely swear.

Wal. [*to* TRESHAM]. Oh! cruel words!

Camp. I pardon thee, my friend.
But tell me, Lord, what pledge to offer them,
What prophet must I be, what deity,
To banish this mistrust which baffles thought?
By what false tales could they deceive you thus?
Throw but one ray of light on all I've heard.
My forged avowals, your imprisonment,
I knew not of. Can Walpole say me false?
Once more my anguish doth adjure you all.

Wal. [*to the Catholics*].
Methinks you are deceived, and deeply wronged.
Of this his grief is ample proof for me.
I trust his word.

Fitt. [*to* WALPOLE]. What, if he cheat thee too?

Charles. Fie! Fie!

Tresh. [*to* CHARLES].
Dost think this agonising doubt,
To which we are a prey, doth gladden us?

Our hearts do bleed—all mangled as they are—
To know they cannot banish it at once.
Fitt. Are we the dupes of this doom'd man, and yet
The scoffers of a martyr? Strange!
Til. God grant
That he may make his innocence full clear.
Nay, let him undeceive us, Charles, and we
Will gladly plead for pardon on our knees.
Charles [*despairingly*]. Wouldst seek a miracle?
Camp. [*looking towards the dungeon*]. O Judge Supreme!
Dispel this darkness; come Thou to mine aid.
Souls are at stake, and wouldst Thou that I fall?
Put forth Thy hand! Illumine their dark minds.
Hop. [*without*, L.]. Unbolt the door!
Charles. My father! Help us, Heav'n!
Hop. [*as before*]. In the Queen's name, unbolt the door, I say.
Camp. Is this the work of God's Almighty hand?
Charles [*to* CAMPION]. Make haste! Withdraw!
Camp. Nay. Wherefore? Draw the bolt,
And God protect us all!
Charles. We are betrayed.
Camp. No matter; 'tis too late. Unbolt the door.

CHARLES *opens the door. Enter* HOPTON *enraged, followed by* ELLIOTT *and soldiers*, L.

Hop. [*not observing his son*].

All here! By Heav'n! What hell-born traitor dared
Befool me thus, and bid you gather here?
Oh! madness!
Ell. [*to* HOPTON]. Did I err in speeding thy return?
See how they guard the Tower, when thou'rt away!
Hop. Charles!——
Camp. [*interrupting him with dignity*].
Be not troubled in respect of us.
Thy captives, Hopton, would not break their bonds!
In proof whereof, behold us all at hand;
Thou dost but find one loathsome lie the less.
I know what means envenomed hate hath used
To blacken my fair name before these men.
Deceit lives but a day, and God hath willed
That wrongful rumours should not long prevail.
Hop. Oh! Vengeance! vengeance!
[*To the soldiers.*] Drag him to the rack.
Tresh. How now?
Wal. His rage doth amply prove his guilt,
Hop. [*to the soldiers*].
Away! Protract his torture unto night.
Camp. [*starting at the word torture; then, looking fixedly at the dungeon, to the Catholics*].
E'en at this cost will you believe me true?
Tresh. Alas! most foully have we been deceived.
Fitt. [*kneeling*].
Oh! pardon, saintly victim, pardon all.

Til. [*kneeling*].
This crime must be washed out by blood alone.
Tresh. [*kneeling*]. Forgive! forgive!
Camp. [*to* HOPTON]. My word they did deny.
And, Hopton, thou alone convincest them.
Ell. [*to* HOPTON]. Thou clumsy knave!
Wal. Vile trickster! Straight the Queen
Shall learn of this; her honour so demands;
Such service, coward, is but treachery.
Hop. I fear not, sir, I have too well obeyed.
Do thou go hence, and see thou ne'er return.
Wal. Beware!
Hop. Begone! Am I not master here?
[WALPOLE *hesitates; then, making up his mind, hurriedly departs,* L.
Drag Campion to the rack!
[*Soldiers advance to seize him.*
Tresh. [*rushing in front of* CAMPION].
Upon what charge?
Fitt. We will go all.
Til. Yes, all.
[*Catholics surround* CAMPION *to defend him.*
Charles. Nay, take but me.
Hop. Thou viper!
Ell. [*to* CHARLES]. Not a word!
Charles. The guilt is mine.
'Twere vain to counterfeit; I am o'erwhelmed.
[*To* CAMPION, *who wishes to check him by a gesture.*

Let me say all. [*To* HOPTON.] And thou, inhuman sire,
Strike! strike! With them I am a son of Rome!
[*Kneeling, he places* CAMPION'S *hand upon his head.*
Bless thou the child that hath imperilled thee.

Camp. God willed it so; we'll suffer then for Him.

Til. So will we all.

[*The Catholics kneel,* CHARLES *rises, kisses* CAMPION'S *hand, and holds it over them.*

Ell. [*pushing* HOPTON *towards the left*].
Dost hear all this? Come! come!

Hop. [*recovering from his stupor*].
My son, a Catholic! I am undone!

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE.

Leicester's Palace. A rich chamber, brilliantly illuminated. Side doors. At the back, a large tapestry curtain. November.

Enter LEICESTER *and* CECIL, R.

Leic. Then, must this Campion lose his head, my lord?

Cecil. His sentence has gone forth, and he must die.

Leic. Wouldst make the Queen the slave of a decree?

Cecil. No, marry. I do seek her welfare—I.

Leic. Of that same welfare I am heedful too.
What good will issue from this violence?

Cecil. Right wholesome dread, without; repose, within.
Blood works that end.

Leic. Well, ay, if timely shed.

Cecil. And what occasion could be better timed?
Our Queen and country's fortune is at stake.
Lo! north and south our foes are up in arms.
Spain threatens us, and Ireland is not quelled.

Rome, to inflame still more her vengeful fires,
Pours forth her gold and her indulgences.
The daughter of the Stuarts—though pent up—
Is arming treason with some keen pretext.
The soul of ev'ry English Catholic
Is steeped in treachery of blackest dye,
And waits but for the signal of the priest.
Think of Charles Hopton.

Leic. [*thoughtfully*]. 'Twas a hasty death.
And what do people say?

Cecil. Tut! let them prate.
The time has come for sudden, weighty blows;
There's need of them; and those who make the need
Must bear their brunt.

Leic. Let's argue honestly.

Cecil. With all my heart.

Leic. Suppose these blows deserved
Will men approve of their severity?

Cecil. What meanest thou?

Leic. These two months, all is changed;
And other thoughts than those of wrath are rife.
For now, when Campion is condemned to die,
No longer a seducer is he deemed,
Or odious agent of a grasping priest.
His genius, worth, the torments he endures,
And—shall I say't?—the strange procedure here
In London, and at court, have made him friends.
Have not your fawning judges, good my lord,
In their blind zeal to win your valued grace,

Imperilled the renown of English law?

Cecil. Their justice somewhat limpeth, I confess.

Leic. To think that Elliott's word can be believed!
Impracticable plots, incongruous tales,
In one short hour, forsooth—at one fell swoop—
Of fourteen honest men make fourteen knaves.
Indeed, my lord, this is o'er much to bear.
'Tis said, this persecution stirs men's minds
To nought but horror and keen sympathy.

Cecil. And wilt thou shrink before a breeze of words?
Dost fear man's hate?

Leic. Far less than ridicule.

Cecil. As for the mob—whatever is, is right.
A blow, and it submits, nor deems aught wrong.

Leic. But history?

Cecil. Dost dread it?

Leic. Thou dost smile.

Cecil. It shall be fairly writ—and in advance—
Just as it suiteth mine own taste and whim.
Let me compose what all the world shall read,
And dictate boldly; hist'ry will obey.

Leic. [*ironically*]. Thine eye is passing keen; it foresees all;
And, verily, I like thy bold intent.
But thou'lt admit that patience, deftly used,
Sometimes disarms e'en thy severity.
Cheney returns from exile; Tresham too
Is freed, and Fitton——

Cecil. Marry, we must nurse
The nobles. But, anent this haughty priest,
Pity for him would argue lack of power.
Leic. Thou mak'st of him a blessed martyr, then,
To be revered by ev'ry recusant.
Cecil. We'll stifle such an issue, good my lord.
Reasons of State demand his blood; and this,
With loudest voice, we will proclaim to all;
And so the vulgar herd will rest content.
Leic. The Queen herself lacks courage such as thine,
For she withholds her sanction from thy scheme.
Cecil. Still, Campion must die—nor mercy seek.
Leic. And dost thou, then, insist upon his death?
Cecil. And dost thou, then, insist upon his life?
Leic. [*half defiantly*]. My lord——
Cecil. Thou'rt free to humour thine own whim.
Right well we know thine influence o'er the Queen.
Proceed, then, to dispute this drop of blood.
We'll see. But I'm detaining those without.
Adieu! [*Exit*, R.
Leic. [*alone*]. If I may rightly fathom him,
He doth defy me. Must the challenge bide?
Had I but this benighted priest to save—
Unmoved by pity, as unmoved by hate,
I might be able—but what wills the Queen?
What eye can read the fluttering caprice
Of that frail heart—that plaything of the winds?
She's but a woman, and, though never near,

This Campion weaves a charm around her soul.
Anon, she'll come without her retinue.
Unseen herself, she'll see the captive priest,
But Cecil, unregarded, must know nought.
Then, Anjou pays her court, and triumphs too.
Mayhap she'll make of him a popish king.
Certes, everything portends that strange event,
But what if, close upon the marriage-feast,
She steeps her hand in unoffending blood,
And thereby sets aflame the people's wrath?
I see her aim, and therein gain mine own.
[*Rings a bell. Enter page*, L.
Is Gloucester here? [*Page bows affirmatively.*
Then bid him come at once. [*Exit page*, L.
The future's veiled in doubt, but we'll do all
To serve good Campion, nor compute the cost.

Enter CHENEY *and* WALPOLE, L.

Leic. Give ear, my lord; and thou, too, Walpole, hear.
I know the love you bear towards Campion.
Would you, e'en here, and, on this very day,
Ensure his safety? Speak. Time speeds along.
Cheney. My lord!
Leic. They bring him soon from out the Tower.
Cheney. Unhappy Edmund!
Wal. To thy palace here?
Leic. The Queen so willeth. Her great soul is moved.
To entertain for him much deep concern.

Cheney. Strange!

Leic. Ere she sign the warrant of his death,
She means herself to hear what he would say.

Wal. Will he behold her?

Leic. No; if royalty
But show itself,—the honour of the crown
Demands that, straightway, pardon be bestowed.
A monarch's glance absolves one from all guilt.
The Queen will listen, but abide unseen.

Cheney. But what will come of this strange interview?
I would not plight mine honour,—but I hope
The fatal sentence will be rent in twain.

Cheney. Kind Heav'n!

Leic. The Queen puts faith in secrecy,
Nor says she aught to her own minister.

Wal. Indeed! And Cecil hath no scent of this?

Leic. Thereto her royal Grace hath pledged her word,
And you alone this weighty secret know.
But, whilst vouchsafing her sweet clemency,
The Queen, elsewhere, hath bid me what to say.
We pity Campion,—but he must be tried.
I am his judge,—and you, his advocates;
Or, rather, he shall plead his own good cause;
And warn him that this trial is his last.
Not one word more. God grant His aid herein!
[*Withdrawing, and pointing to the tapestry curtain.*
When I return, the Queen will be within. [*Exit*, R.

Cheney. What! save him! snatch him from the cruel tree!
Can my declining years be gladdened so?
What sorrow did his flight ingraft in us!
Thou dost remember my amaze,—thy tears,
When he went hence,—and when thou badest me read
The letter that revealed his frenzied mind.
What future greatness crushed by foolish fears!
And now!—But, haply, all may be effaced.
This royal visit bodes a pleasing end.
How now? Some gloomy doubt o'erveils thy looks,
And, while an old man glows with ardent hopes,
On thy young face an icy coldness sets.
Mistrustest thou the bounty of the Queen?
Wal. We barely hope for what we barely wish.
Cheney. What! dost thou set his safety, then, at nought?
Wal. God knows,—to win it I would stake mine own.
Cheney. Well, well. What then?
Wal. . . . . . I openly avow
'Twere better that he die than be defamed.
Cheney. Speak out. Explain.
Wal. My lord, how dare we dream
That we can save him, and respect his faith?
Dost think his staunch adherence thereunto
Can e'er be free from persecution's scourge?

No, no. To save his life, he must deny
Whate'er his conscience whispers is the truth.
Convince him? Never! And my pride rebels
Against the thought, that our sole aim must be
To make a coward and false knave of him.
Ah! deemest thou the gibbet worse than this?
Cheney. But, Walpole, he hath strayed.
Wal. Art sure of that?
Cheney. What meanest thou?
Wal. Why, learn mine inmost thoughts.
My soul is wounded by these bitter doubts.
Cheney. A papist! Thou?
Wal. No, no. Not yet.
Cheney. Say on.
Wal. Ah! God alone can tell what I now am.
There's nothing stable in my fluttering soul,
And Campion dazzles me, and leads me on
By the example he hath boldly set.
I'd fain convince him,—but 'tis he——
Cheney. Alas!
Wal. Reproach me not. My anguish is extreme.
Yet, whilst my heart throbs with its native pride,
What lustrous rays illume my saddened eyes!
Are all our bishops, pastors—lying knaves?
I saw your learnèd doctors gravely stand
In brave array, opposed to Campion.
I saw your hireling shepherd face to face
With that august apostle of the Lord.
In one was mirrored ev'ry shade of pride;

The other glowed with zeal unsatiable.
In vain did they assail with haughty wrath
This tortured priest, who baffled all their wiles.
He stands the victor,—and my troubled soul
Doth bear true witness to his victory.
He hath destroyed my peace,—my strength of faith.
Do thou, who still believ'st, stretch forth thy hand,
And save me, lest I be a child of Rome.
Art dumb, my lord?

Cheney. Nay, banish this sad dream.
We will together save this doomèd man.

Wal. What! at the cost of a degrading lie?

Cheney [*after pausing*].
In such an hour of strife, to fail me thus!
But Campion comes. What must we do?

Wal. He's here.

Enter CAMPION, *led by* NORRIS *and soldiers, who immediately withdraw,* R.

Camp. Where am I? What! My good lord Cheney here!
Mine eyes are dazed,—nor dare they look on him.
And art thou Walpole?

Wal. Even so, good sir.

Camp. [*advancing eagerly to Cheney, who has remained seated, his face buried in his hands*].
Wilt not embrace thine Edmund, good my lord?

Cheney [*rising and embracing him*]. My son!

Camp. I thank my God that, ere I die,

He grants me this brief hour to heal thy soul.
Such was my dearest hope,—my last desire.
Cheney. And is it thus that we must meet again?
Condemned! condemned!
Camp. Oh! happy, happy doom,
Which will to-morrow give me lasting life!
Weep not for me. But say,—these fifteen years——
Cheney. How have they weighed me down in mine old age!
Thy master hastens onward to the tomb.
A fell disease consumes him ceaselessly,
And, on a sudden, it may strike him down.
Why live I still?
Camp. [*with authority*].
God waits for thee, my lord.
Cheney [*pretending not to understand*].
No doubt He spares me to preserve thy life.
Camp. Look to thyself. God wills thee so to do.
Cheney. Oh! as for me,—I bide mine end in peace.
Camp. Art thou at peace? No, no, my lord, not so,
Nor hadst thou peace when thine own fickleness
Did bind my weakness to that cruel Church,—
Thy law-appointed mother, good my lord.
Thy labours for that Church have been too slight.
Thy heart estranged from her,—and eke from God,
By thy false mother stricken with disgrace,—
And righteously rejected by thy true,—

Thou draggest out thy waning life in woe.
Such is thy peace. 'Twere time to rid thee on't.
Cheney. And how, poor soul? And how?
Camp. Repent! repent!
Nay, do not spurn the tender voice of Heav'n.
[CHENEY *answers by a sign of despair.*
Cheney [*to* WALPOLE, *who listens, deeply moved*].
Give ear, good Walpole, to this vehemence.
Must old and dying men be thus assailed?
Camp. Ah! dying! say'st thou? Then, am I as thou.
Wal. [*suppressing his emotion*]. 'Tis true.
Camp. This is for both a solemn hour.
Beneath the rays of the eternal dawn,
Let's face the goal which we to-morrow reach.
Cheney. Enough! What! Death! Here is my outstretched hand;
And thou, ungrateful soul, wouldst madly seize
That hand which loves thee,—and which suffers too,—
To lead me onwards to the yawning gulf!
Wouldst have me share the gibbet, pray, with thee?
Camp. [*solemnly*]. Wouldst share the glory of a martyr's death?
I know not; but, at last——
Cheney. No. Walpole, come,
Tell this insensate he mistakes his part,
And that the dread abyss is gaping wide,
To which he blindly speeds in frenzied haste;

Oh! bid him save himself.

Camp. [*checking* WALPOLE *by a gesture*].
Not so; not so.
Nay, if we needs must choose between our fates,
I know that he, rejecting length of years,
Would fix his choice on death, along with me.

Wal. [*entreating*]. Forbear! No more!

Camp. [*to* WALPOLE, *compassionately*].
But God will conquer yet.
Behold, Eternal Father, these two souls.
They stand unmoved 'neath Thy chastising hand.
Strike, strike again. They must together yield.
[*To* CHENEY.] Love chafes sometimes; nay, wounds that she may heal.
Mine importunity, methinks, displeases thee.
When death's relentless voice doth menace thee——

Cheney [*terrified*]. Oh! Edmund!

Camp. When the eternal fires are nigh,
What time have I, beyond this fleeting hour,
To bring thee back to conscience and to God?
I strive for this. Enough, I seek nought else.
What have my captors willed? What will they now?
Where am I?

Enter LEICESTER, R. U. E.

Cheney. Leicester!

Wal. [*aside*]. And the Queen, hard by!

Leic. [*to* CAMPION]. Thou standest, friend, within my palace walls.

Camp. [*bowing*] My lord!——

Leic. Be seated.

[*Seating himself near* CHENEY, L. WALPOLE *remains standing, much agitated. Paces up and down, but avoids the curtain.*]

Leic. [*continuing to* CAMPION]. By the law condemned,

Nought now remains but that thou suffer death.
And, yet, give heed unto our Queen's good grace.
Her royal will vouchsafes her clemency.
Could'st e'er have sought such favour at her hands?

Camp. I render all due honour to the Queen;
The same to thee——

Leic. We do but speak of *her.*
Those glorious days at Oxford, now long past,—
Her former favours lavished on thyself—
Thy genius—all things move her clemency.
It is to merit this that thou art here.

Camp. [*aside*]. To merit this!

Leic. [*pointing to* CHENEY]. My lord hath doubtless said

That, close at hand, the Queen doth hear thy speech.
She would know all.

Camp. If she be hereabout
Her eyes can read my heart; it is unveiled.

Leic. Well, be it so. But fear to weary her,
Or prove thyself unworthy of her grace.
There's need——

Camp. Pray, pardon, good my lord; but yet

Thou know'st that silence argues coy consent.
None but the guilty need forgiveness seek,
And I am innocent.

Cheney. One word, I pray.

Camp. Truth stands arrayed against that single word.

Leic. Beware lest pride——

Camp. My soul doth know no pride.
I plead mine innocence, and speak no lie.

Leic. Dost deem thyself a martyr to thy Faith?

Camp. I dare not claim that title for myself,
Yet I do love and welcome such a death;
For I do know that it ensures my bliss,
And, through a path of honour, leads to God.

Leic. Honour, indeed!

Cheney. Nay, nay, through deep disgrace.
'Tis but the gallows—fearful agony!
'Tis but the heart torn from the panting breast.

Leic. Think'st thou of that?

Camp. I know what doth await.
The very day I stepped on English soil,
On that dread gibbet was my mind intent;
And now I love it with a rapturous love.
It is my cross, and Christ doth sweeten it.

Wal. [*aside*]. Oh, mighty soul!

Leic. His words are mystical;
But in this cloud there's one avowal clear.
He knew his coming did but merit death;
He felt his guilt. [*To* CAMPION.] How say'st?

Camp. [*with modest firmness*]. Not so, my lord.
Leic. Didst know the law?
Camp. 'Tis published far and wide.
Cheney. Didst hope to change it?
Camp. Even so.
Cheney. False hope!
Leic. So this avowal falls from thine own lips.
Thou didst defy the law?
Camp. Obeying God. [*A pause.*
I knew my country—was too proud of her—
To fear that she would ever madly cling
To that bloodthirsty code devised for us.
Leic. The work of parliament and of our Queen!
Camp. Methought, my lord, a woman and a Queen
Would weary soon of counsels born of hate.
But, pray, what have I done? What rights betrayed?
Did I bring war unto my native shores?
A papal edict——
Wal. Heav'n!
Leic. [*bitterly*]. We know it well.
Camp. For ten long years before I hither came,
A bitter doubt unhinged the loyalty
Of ev'ry English heart that clung to faith.
Henceforth, whoso to Rome is leal and true
Is free to swear allegiance to our Queen.
The Sovereign Pontiff, at mine own request,
Doth so expound his predecessor's law.
Wal. [*aside*]. 'Tis true.
Camp. Such is my work. Say, good my lord,

[*To* LEICESTER.] If aught of treason lie concealed therein.
Beneath the folds of this my priestly robe,
Did I bring peace or discord to these shores? "
Then, I did dare to hope; but if deceived—
If doomed to find your greeting all too harsh—
Why, then 'twas mine to gladly welcome it,
The while I cast my thoughts on Calvary.
Though not a breach of duty e'er was mine,
Thou see'st how I forecast my punishment;
And there was need of foresight, good my lord.
Leic. [*ironically*]. Thou seek'st reward—i' faith—not chastisement.
Oh! wonderful!
Camp. My lord——
Cheney. If thus he thinks,
His reason must have erred beyond conceit;
But, still, no treason lurketh in his heart.
Nay, judge him kindly. He is gentle, meek—
A pliant tool in traitors' crafty hands,
Not knowing their intent.
Camp. I prythee, cease.
Cheney. Oh! let me save thee!
Camp. Not by means so base.
My leaders are commissioned from on High,
And nought shall taint my loyalty to them.
Leic. We know the nature of thy wretched sect.
Down-trodden slave of a tyrannic power!
A crime—if bidden—thou deem'st innocent.

Thou lifeless tool, that lackest thought or will,
Nought can reanimate thy frozen soul;
Thou art no more a man!

Camp. [*smiling*]. Oh! would to God!——

Leic. I speak the truth.

Cheney. [*to* CAMPION]. Say on.

Camp. Is this the place?
Will e'er the world's proud sages understand
The mystery of our obedience?

Cheney [*aside*]. Thou fanatic!

Leic. [*to* CAMPION]. Have pity on thyself.
This Pope of Rome, to whom they bend the knee,
This living idol of the Vatican,
Is thy dread hangman; he, the cruel priest,
Who thus doth immolate, and yield thee up
Into our hands—abandoned, weak, unarmed.

Camp. He is my father—gentle, well-beloved.

Cheney [*pointing to* CAMPION].
Thou art his victim.

Camp. There'll be more anon.
When Christ's Apostles sallied forth to die,
They walked erect, their hearts all full of joy.
And wouldst thou that I grudge my life to Him?
God grant that I, as they, may die in peace!
But then—— [*To* LEICESTER, *with deep emotion.*]
Thou art in favour with the Queen.
So, let thy voice bear to Her Majesty
This weighty message, which a humble priest
Sends from the threshold of eternity:

"Thy crown is thine, by right of heritage,
And England's soul thou bearest in thine hands.
A dread account thou needs must one day give.
Why wrench that soul, entrusted to thy charge,
From out the centre of unfailing Light,
Of unity, of love, of lasting Truth?
Wilt thereby render it more glad, more pure?
Doth it behove a wise man, or a king,
To poison Faith within a nation's breast?
Thy grace, thy gifts, thine empire are from God,
Think what the Eternal Wisdom asks of thee;
For England and thyself His Will is this—
To God's own Church give back this Isle of Saints."

Leic. [*ironically*]. Resume the garb of bondage, long cast off!

Camp. No! Guard the sacred limit of your rights.

Cheney. Who dares set limit to the rights of kings?

Camp. Christ, King of all the world, and King of kings.

Leic. No priest, no man, shall stand 'twixt Christ and us.

Camp. But Christ lives in His Church.

Leic. Thy Church is Rome.

Wal. [*to* CAMPION]. And, yet, thou lov'st thy country's honour well.

Cheney. Wouldst drag it 'neath the yoke?

Camp. The yoke of Christ.
To ten historic ages I appeal:

Have all the reigns of all our English kings,
Who paid allegiance to the Pope of Rome,
Been barren of all glory? No, my lord.
And, oh! the fruitful destiny bequeathed
To these brave days, in which we now do live!
Our ships sweep o'er the seas to distant worlds;
I see, I see, our hardy race go forth
To plant great England's might 'neath ev'ry sky.
But oh! what glory for my native land,
If,—as the royal messenger of Truth,—
She spread afar the spotless faith of Christ!
My love has dreamed so; may it cost my blood!
[*To* LEICESTER.] My lord, go, see the Queen, and say,——

Leic. Enough.
She'll lend no ear to these wild dreams of thine.
[*At this moment*, CECIL *bursts open the door*, R.C., *and enters paper in hand.*]

Cecil. She hath heard all,—and this is her reply.

Wal. Oh! God!

Leic. What! Cecil here!

Cheney. And with him,—Death!

Cecil. Ay, marry,—Death. The warrant's duly signed.

Camp. How now? The Queen ——

Cecil. Ay, traitor, she was there.

Camp. On this, the last day of my mortal life,
I have confessed Thee, Lord, before the Queen.
I give Thee thanks.

Leic. [*to* CECIL]. But, thou here! 'neath my roof!
From whom didst learn?——
Cecil [*smiling*]. The Queen.
Leic. [*aside*]. Foul treason, this!
She hath deceived me. [*Aloud.*] I'll beseech her!
Cecil [*checking him*]. No.
She doth forbid it. I will mind the rest.
[*Rings the bell.*
Enter NORRIS, L. CECIL *points to* CAMPION.
There stands the captive; seize him; drag him forth.
Camp. [*to* CHENEY, *on going*].
My lord, look up to God! Farewell!
Cecil [*to* CAMPION]. Away!
[*Exit* CAMPION *with* NORRIS, L.
Cecil [*to* LEICESTER]. If I have sought the welfare of the State,
Thy friendship, earl, will deem it no offence.
Adieu! [*Exit* R.C. *door.*
Leic. To taunt me thus, as he goes hence!
And that false woman! Dally I no more.
This wrong enlisteth me in Campion's cause.
Cheney. Now all is ended.
Leic. No; not so, my lord.
I know the Queen too well: I'll hasten hence,
And see her,—dog her steps. My honour on't,
This Campion shall not die a traitor's death.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE.

A house near the gate of Tyburn. Room on first floor. Window L., *looking on to the square.* 1*st December.*

Wal. [*alone at window*]. How crowded, even now, the fatal spot!
There stand the friends of Tyburn,—hideous fiends,—
Who laugh at torture, and get drunk on blood;—
And Puritans of solemn gait and mien.
But others, too, I see, are gathered there,
Whom yet a better motive doth allure,—
For lo! they vie in zealous rivalry
To catch the perfume of the martyr's blood.
[*Leaving the window.*
Ay, gather round, friends, foes! For now, at least,
The sight is new,—the victim, somewhat choice.
Sad mystery of these our troubled times,
That he should die at Tyburn! England, shame!
That thou dost hither drag thy noblest sons.
If I withhold a curse on English law,
It is because I love thy fame and thee.

To-day, thank God, I feel my soul at ease;
For I would have him live. No treason,—that!
They mean no longer to pollute his name.
Enter CHENEY, R., *leaning on the arm of a page, who immediately withdraws.*
Wal. Come in. At first, I feared some grave mischance.
Catesby's away; but we can tarry here.
Cheney [*sitting at his right*]. What! not returned yet from his country seat!
Wal. For Campion's sake, he granted all I wished.
The secret passage from the grounds without
Lies open,—and his flight is thus secure.
Nay more, his whereabouts will rest unknown.
Yes, he shall live,—for all things so portend.
Cheney. Alas! my courage droops. I'm ill at ease
In striving thus to save his hapless life.
I deem it forfeited by Heav'n's decree.
To what dread torments have I stood exposed!
Wal. How now, my lord?
Cheney. We shall behold him die.
Some voice doth stifle hope and whisper so.
Wal. The Queen hath promised all—nay, signed it, too.
Cheney. Think'st thou yon Cecil will submit to that,
Or let his rival's conquest pass uncalled?
Nay, look thou for another crafty stroke

Of his relentless spirit, which, at last,
By one rude thrust, will win for him again
Whatever Leicester held for one brief day.
Wal. Pray, what can he effect?
Cheney. I wot not, but methinks
He will not stay his hand; for hate, we know,
Is swift, and cunning, and resolved, withal.
But is his hatred all we needs must dread?
We aim at Campion's rescue; but will he
Be quick to lend himself to our attempt?
Wal. Why not? Doth our intent inflict a wrong?
Or would we ask him basely to betray
His honour as a man, his faith in Rome?
He'll quit this island, and his own right hand
Will sign a promise never to return.
Ah! if thou didst demand of his pure soul
The shadow, even, of a cowardly crime,
Then should I fear his virtue and his pride.
Or, rather, I would spurn complicity,
And, straightway, urge him onward to his fate.
Cheney [*aside*]. How happy in thy wish!
Wal. Nay more, my lord,
If others were condemned to die with him,
My heart would fail to urge him still to live,
For he would only yearn to follow them
Along the bloodstained path that leads to death.
And rest assured that his indignant soul
Would spurn the shame of being spared alone.
But he's the only victim they do seek—

None else but him. What, prythee, dost thou dread?

Cheney. Alas! I know not. All things chill my soul,
And all things speak of death upon the spot.
Tis Cecil and God's vengeance I do dread.

Wal. On Campion, my lord?

Cheney. Not so.

Wal. Upon thyself?
Art guilty, thou?

Cheney. A weighty problem, faith,
So oft evaded—never clearly solved!
What have I done? What am I? Why this fear?

Wal. What! so, my lord? But wherefore tremble thus?

Cheney. List! while, in turn, I speak mine inmost thoughts.
Thou know'st my heart. He hath uprooted it.
I dread this Campion. Startled at his voice,
A thousand phantoms hover o'er my soul.
Oh! must I die to-day—this very day?

Wal. Die? Thou?

Cheney. A sudden, tho' long looked-for death
Is nigh at last. Its hand is on my head.
What! but one day! And shall I be prepared?

Wal. Nay, calm thyself.

Cheney. But is thine own wound healed?

Wal. No, no. I ever suffer, hope, and pray.

Cheney. A sacred duty which I've rather shunned

Than e'er forgotten! I have breathed no prayer
These thirty years. Alas! so frail was I!
I closed my lips, my heart, in sight of God,
For very dread lest He might grant my prayer.
Wal. Be of good hope. E'en now we'll seek His Will.
Oh! God! if our salvation so demand,
Smite, smite us down 'neath Thy all-chastening hand,
But yield not Campion up to cruel death.
Still, whether he do live or die, oh! speak!
What heav'nly ray can be too bright for us?
Nay, should Thy very lightnings fall on us,
Illumine, Lord, our dark and sinful souls.
No matter what betide, reveal Thy truth!
Cheney [*in terror*]. No matter what betide? Is this thy prayer?
Wal. Ay; say it o'er with me.
Cheney. I dare not so.
[*Seeing* LEICESTER *enter*, L.] Oh! God!
Leic. My retinue had much ado
To cleave the waves of yon vast sea of men.
[*To* WALPOLE.] Art ready?
Wal. Ay, my lord——
Leic. [*going to the window*]. Relentless fiends!
Your thirst for blood will once at least, I trow,
Be sorely tantalised and unappeased.
Wal. Is Cecil safe?
Leic. To soothe his own defeat,

That mighty stateman did not grudge to take
The gold profusely offered by the recusants.
Cheney. Such is the virtue of your Puritans.
Leic. [*sitting down*]. List! Tresham and good Fitton, yesterday—
I hold it as a truth from their own lips—
Did haste to Anjou.
Cheney. Little hope lies there.
Leic. But lend an ear. This Anjou was at play.
They urged him, nay, adjured him to give heed.
Awhile he's disconcerted; stands perplexed;
Then, suddenly forgetting their intent,—
"On with the game!" he said. And that is all
That English Catholics may hope from him.
Wal. [*looking out of the window*]. The victim!
Cheney. Lord of hosts!
Wal. 'Tis he! 'tis he!
He's stretched upon the hurdle, and begrimed
With all the gory mud it sweeps along!
[*Groanings without.*
Leic. Dost hear the long-drawn groanings of the mob?
Wal. Oh! hideous sight!
Cheney. Oh! what a rueful day!
Wal. [*to* LEICESTER.]
See, Norris frees him from his cruel bonds,
And wipes away all trace of his affronts.
Leic. Lo! now he stands erect, unmoved, and calm!
Cheney. Oh! noble heart!

Leic. They lead him off!
Wal. [*to* CHENEY]. He comes!
He's saved! he's saved!
Cheney [*while* LEICESTER *and* WALPOLE *go towards* CAMPION]. Oh! God of life and death!
Upon my knees I fall before Thy face;
For him, at least, for him I still can pray.
Oh! be Thou praised!
Enter CAMPION, NORRIS, *and soldiers*, L.
Camp. My lords! What! Walpole here!
Wal. [*grasping his hands*]. Be of good heart!
Camp. What wouldst thou now, good sir?
And, pray you all, what is your will with me?
Cheney. That thou do live.
[LEICESTER, *aside, gives instructions to* NORRIS.
Camp. What! Live! E'en still to live!
Ah! cruel Pity, that wouldst use me so,
When I am nigh to Heav'n! Come, kindly Death!
Oh! sacred palm, for which I've yearned so long,
Dost vanish whilst I hold thee in my hand?
[*Pointing to the place of execution.*
My happiness lay there; and must I wait?
So many combats o'er, what would you still?
Mine end hath come; my lot can know no change.
I am a stranger to all living things.
Leic. [*to* NORRIS]. Withdraw!
[*Exit* NORRIS, R., *with soldiers.*
Camp. E'en now I'm numbered with the dead.
Leic. Thou shalt be born again.

Camp. And by whose will?
Wal. Our friendship doth unfold before thine eyes
A new horizon, and doth lead thee back
To studious paths and honourable toil.
Do but consent.
Camp. Consent! What! Yield! Abjure!
Dost hope for that e'en still? Ah! foolish hope!
Wal. I'd blush to hope for that.
Camp. What then?
Leic. Give heed
Unto the Queen's last act of clemency.
Remain thou true unto thy Romish faith,
But quit these Protestant dominions.
Make thou for Dover. [*Showing him a parchment.*
Here's a passport hence.
There stands thy escort. [*Pointing to* WALPOLE.
Thou canst trust in him.
Guards, horses—all are here by my command.
Accept but this condition we impose,
And leave thy country, never to return.
[*Presenting to him a written formula.*
Sign this, and thou art free.
Camp. [*without looking at the paper*]. And, if I yield,
To-morrow will a thousand voices ring—
Inspired by craft and blatant heresy,
And blazon forth my base apostasy.
Cheney. Art sure of that?

Leic. And dost thou doubt my word?
My honour on't——
Camp. Pray, pardon me, my lord,
But canst thou answer for thy preachers' tongues?
Wal. I pledge my word for them. I'll silence all.
Nay, should my very life-blood be outpoured
To prove this truth, which they would fain deny,
God be my witness, that thine exiled soul
Did carry hence thy Faith unstained and pure.
Leic. What wouldst thou more?
Cheney. Sign, and go free.
Camp. No, no.
By law condemned to death, I stand defamed.
I go not hence begirt with infamy.
[*To* LEICESTER.] If't be thy pleasure that I live, my lord,
Throw wide that window; tell the surging throng,
Assembled there to see my life-blood flow,
That I am innocent, and must not die.
Wal. Oh! honourable scruples!
Leic. 'Tis caprice.
Must I defame the justice of the land?
[*To* CAMPION.
Wouldst have it pilloried to clear thy guilt?
Cheney. And if thou die, art therefore less debased?
Check these mad humours of false honour, pray.
Behold these outstretched hands, which soon must droop,
And fail my bidding, and lie cold in death!

Edmund, it is thy friend, thy grey-haired sire,
Who falls exhausted on his trembling knees.
[*Falling gently on his knees near the chair,*
WALPOLE *supporting him.*
Behold these tears, the last I e'er shall shed,
How, drop by drop, they steal from my dim eyes!
Leic. Bears pride a charm to stand unmoved by this?
Camp. [*overcome, raises* CHENEY].
Oh! 'tis too much!
Cheney. Wilt live?
Camp. [*firmly*]. I'm doomed to die.
Cheney. Thou'rt free to choose; thou can'st——
Camp. No, no, my lord.
I am a priest,—a soldier, an' thou wilt:
My solemn vows—my military oath—
In duty bind me to my native land.
I owe allegiance to the Pope of Rome;
My high commission I do hold from him,
And to exchange it is a traitor's part.
I am not free to choose, and, mark me well,
Nor pledge, nor promise shalt thou have from me;
For, thereby, I should overleap my bounds.
Then, drive me hence to-day; I know my course;
To-morrow I return.
Wal. Brave soul!
Leic. 'Tis madness this.
Camp. What Peter binds, Peter alone can loose.
But should he, one day, free me from my vow,

I'd straightway go, and beg him on my knees,
To rivet me once more to these loved shores,
Where I received God's Faith in baptism.
Oh! isle of Saints, he knows my love for thee!
He would not seek to blunt my keen desire
To spread God's Truth throughout my native land.
Oh! noble England! thou art led astray;
I shield thy Faith, which lying men would wound.
To this one end I pledge my waning years,
And die a martyr—ever serving thee!

Leic. He dallies still with death.

Cheney. How blind! how blind!

Leic. Time flies; e'en now he should be gone far hence.

Wal. [*to* CAMPION].
But, prythee, list—the other prisoners——

Camp. Whatever be their lot, that lot is mine;
I die with them.

Wal. Nay, rather, save them too.

Camp. And how?

Wal. Say that thyself wilt live. If not,—
Then they must go to Tyburn after thee.
Flee hence, and, thereby, save them from their doom.

Cheney. The Queen, in sparing thee, must spare them too;
For, when the chief finds mercy, who will say
That those in league with him must suffer death?

Leic. Oh! Campion! save them from a cruel fate.

Their lives are in thy hands.

Camp. [*looking up to heaven*]. What say they, Lord?

Their lives? Their lives?

Wal. [*to* CHENEY]. He wavers. Oh! kind Heaven!

[*To* CAMPION]. And, if the Queen vouchsafe to pardon them,

Wilt tread the bloodstained field of Death alone?

Her heart was moved alike towards them and thee.

To a spurn favour is to kindle wrath;

And soon, perchance, her anger bursting forth,

Will smite them for thy stubborn haughtiness.

Then save them——

Camp. No. Their safety rests with God.

Thou know'st my vow. My duty I'll fulfil.

Leic. What duty, pray? 'Tis blind obedience.

We do but ask thee never to return.

Come, promise,—but reserve the papal rights.

Wal. On that condition, what can stay thy hand?

Cheney [*to* LEICESTER]. My gracious lord!

Leic. The Queen will be displeased,

But I will brave her anger in the cause.

Cheney [*to* CAMPION]. Now, sign.

Leic. I prythee, are thy scruples quelled?

Camp. [*deeply moved*]. Oh! martyrdom! Thou day-dream of my soul,

Does God reject my heart's most ardent prayer?
What shall I say, O Lord? Inspire my mind.
Leic. [*to* CHENEY]. See! see! He falters, and, methinks, he yields.
Camp. [*rushing eagerly to the window*].
Oh! Tyburn! whither I did come to die!——
But lo! the surging throng makes way once more!
Yon retinue——
Wal. [*hastening to the window*]. How now?
Camp. More victims still!
Leic. Can that be so?
Camp. Then, rightly I refused.
[*Looking again.*] Lo! Bryant, Sherwin, my two fellow-priests!
Come! we will die together for the Faith!
[*Returning towards* LEICESTER, *who has left the window, and who is now walking up and down in great agitation.*]
Is flight, my lord, likewise in store for them?
[*A pause.*
Thou mak'st no answer, and thy head doth droop.
Leic. [*aside*]. Oh! madness!
Camp. I can ne'er survive alone.
I knew, O God, that Thou didst will my death.
[*He becomes absorbed in thought.*
Leic. Yet, once again, I'm cheated, mocked, befooled!
This Cecil hath entrapped me in his snare.
And lo! to surely damn my bold intent,

He treacherously kills two victims more.
In truth, 'tis he ——

Wal. [*at the window*]. I see the knave himself.

Leic. He comes! I will not brook his braggart tongue.
I'll hence. [*To* CAMPION.] And thou, I vainly sought to save,
Die, in thy foolish mood, since die thou wilt!
[*Exit*, R.

Wal. Prudence hath fled,—but Friendship still remains.

Cheney. Alas! what boots it?

Camp. Lord, Thy time is near.
Friends, Cecil comes, and I go hence to die.
There's but another moment left to us.
[*To* CHENEY, *throwing himself on his knees.*
Thy soul, my lord, oh! let me save thy soul!
[*To* WALPOLE, *embracing him.*
Good Henry, I do reckon too on thine.

Wal. [*pointing to* CHENEY]. Pray, pray for us.

Camp. Now, hence to death!

Enter CECIL, *followed by* HOPTON, ELLIOTT, *and soldiers*, L.

Cecil. What! ho!
The earl not here! Then, gained he nought at all?
I came to second his high-souled intent.

Cheney [*aside*]. Thou traitor!

Wal. [*to* CECIL]. Why, my lord, two victims more?

Cecil [*not deigning to reply. To* CAMPION].
What! hast not fled?
Camp. My duty is to die.
Cecil. Good! good!
[*To* CHENEY *and* WALPOLE *with half-suppressed irony.*
The Queen's a woman,—apt to change;—
Her heart conspires sometimes against herself.
But soon her reason doth resume its sway.
[*To the soldiers, pointing to* CAMPION.
This papist to the gallows!
[*Seeing the passport left by* LEICESTER *on the table.*
Here's the pass!
'Twill little serve him now.
[*About to tear it up, but changing his mind, he keeps it by him.*
[*To* HOPTON.] Give ear, my friend.
Wouldst thou regain my favour, heed my word.
Avenge thy son, whom from thy very roof
This fellow did entice. I charge thee now,
See to the death of all these Romish spies.
Hop. [*to* CAMPION]. Die, doubly damned, thou murd'rer of my boy!
[*Cecil whispers aside to* HOPTON.
Camp. [*looking towards heaven*].
Oh! Charles, who art a blessed martyr now,—
Thou, who did'st feed me with the Bread of Heaven,
Behold my hour is nigh; complete thy task.
Elliott. [*agitated*]. Oh! Master Edmund.

Camp. Well, what wouldst thou now?

Ell. Forgive the wounds my vengeance did inflict,
And save me from the anger of thy friends.

Camp. Ah! dread thou that of Heav'n!

Wal. [*pushing* ELLIOTT *aside*]. Enough! vile slave!
What! punish thee? We leave that sorry task
To those fell tyrants thou hast loved to serve.
Nay, an' thou dread'st the wrath of Catholics,
Know, nought but pity comes of their disgust.

Camp. [*to* ELLIOTT]. Repent!

Cecil [*coming forward. To* CAMPION]. Wilt hold thy peace?
[*To soldiers.*] Lead off this man.

Cheney. Oh! Edmund!

Camp. One step more, and Jesus comes!
Adieu! good Walpole—— [*Pointing to Heaven.*
[*To* CHENEY.] And, my lord——

Cecil [*furiously*]. Begone!

[*Exeunt all, except* CHENEY *and* WALPOLE, L.

Cheney [*rising with difficulty*].
Now, all is o'er. Let's quit this fatal spot.
Come, Walpole, take my hand——

Wal. Nay, rest awhile.
[*Pointing to the place of execution.*
There stands thy litter. Will they let us pass?
The mob, each moment, surgeth like the sea.

Cheney. Must we behold him die? Oh! woful sight!

Remain? while there, before our very eyes——
[*In sudden terror.*
Ah! some unwonted pang doth pierce my soul.
Escape we by the gardens!—What say I?
Unhappy me! My tott'ring steps do fail.
[*Falls helplessly into his chair.*
Hour of despair, and ceaseless agony!
Oh! Edmund! 'twixt us twain, I suffer most:
I know my guilt, and God can punish me.
Wal. [*musing*]. Scenes of the past! Why now revisit me?
Oh! Oxford! Where our joyous youth was spent!
That last day's tournament of lofty minds!
That night so cruel,—yet, so bright withal,—
On which we did exult o'er his renown,
But which did see him exiled for the Faith!—
How bright the dawn!—The eve——!
[*Pointing to the place of execution.*
Lo! there he stands!
Cheney [*looking in alarm towards the windows*].
Yon sight appals me;—yet, it fascinates.
'Tis Edmund! 'tis my son! Slain, slain, by Hate!
Am I deceived, my friend? Heard I his voice?
Keep from me nought, but tell me all thou see'st—
Speak! speak! arouse thee from thy reverie.
How fares he, Walpole?
Wal. Why, methinks he prays.
Cheney. And have they placed him on the fatal car?

Wal. E'en now I see them tie the deadly knot.
[*A pause.*
But, lo! a horseman! on a foaming steed!
Catesby!
Cheney [*going to the window*]. 'Tis he!
Wal. He straineth ev'ry nerve.
Cheney. He comes too late!
Wal. He will but see him die.
Cheney. Die? Die? But oh! Death's hand hath struck me too!
Wal. Hark! hark! they bid him pray for England's Queen.
He prays! he smiles! I see his glistening eyes.
Their insults drown his prayer!
Cheney. The preaching fiends!
To heap their gibes upon a dying man!
Wal. As for the people,—I would dare assert,—
If, by their silence, I do judge aright,—
That, seized with dread, nay, even with remorse,—
They see Death's angels hovering on high.
Cheney. I tremble, as their wings go wafting by:
They chill my blood. [*Shouting without.*
Wal. A cry for pardon! Hark!
And Hopton answers with a fiendish yell!
[*Uttering a loud cry.*
Oh! God! the car is swiftly dragged away!
And Edmund, lifeless, hangs 'twixt earth and Heav'n!
Kneel! kneel!

[*A pause, then* WALPOLE *rises, and looks again.*

And now the hangman cuts him down!
The hatchet soon must cleave his quiv'ring limbs.

[*Starting back in horror.*

Cheney. Oh! God!

Wal. Dost tremble, coward? See him die.
And learn, at least, to know what he can bear.

[*Shouting without.*

What means yon shout? It stays the hangman's axe!
Shall, then, this feast of blood one horror lack?
E'en so. A pitying cry goes forth to Heav'n,
And spares the martyr something of his pain.
God's hand hath pointed to their glutted hate.
Their steel will fall on lifeless marble now——
They leave him by the gibbet—— All is o'er.
His body wears the rigid garb of Death.
I see nor sign, nor glance, nor breath, nor stir——
He's dead!

Cheney. He's dead?

Wal. Oh! pure and saintly soul,
Art now a glorious denizen of Heaven?
Pray thou for us.

Cheney. Oh! Edmund!—— [*Shouting without.*

Wal. Hark again!
Bryant——

Cheney. Help! Walpole! help! I die,—I die!

Wal. [*hastening towards him*]. How now?

Cheney. Death's icy hand is on me, friend.

Wal. [*running towards the* R. *door*].
What! ho! Help! help! But who can hear my cries?
There's no one by. We tarry here alone.
[*Leaning over* CHENEY.
Cheney. Oh! Rome! Oh! Campion! Mercy, oh!
my God! [*He dies.—Silence.*
Wal. [*seeing that he is dead*].
His soul hath fled! And thus, the hangman ends
Two lives at once.—Two souls, I loved so well,
Have sped together to the judgment seat!
And, ah! how fare they now before the Judge?
[*Going to the window.*
I see a bleeding corpse exposed there still,
Whose entrails burn upon a pan of fire.
[*Returning to* CHENEY.
Thou grey-haired prelate, summoned hence to God
To-morrow I shall view thy funeral pomp.
But, 'twixt these deaths, if I were now to choose——
[*A pause.*
Thy awful rays, O Lord, are red with blood.
My sluggish soul had need of this dread scourge.
I see the finger of Thy strong right-hand.
[*Pointing to Tyburn.*
The saving Truth lies ever nigh to blood. [*Kneeling.*
Oh! blessed martyr, thou hast vanquished me.
I throw myself a captive at thy feet.
Mine eyes, long dry, once more let fall their tears:
My pride, now yielding, melts beneath thy hand:
I love, and I believe. I bow to Rome.

[*Rising and gazing at* CHENEY'S *body.*
And he? Dread problem that I cannot solve!
Where dwells the soul of this forlorn old man?
God urged him oft,—but he did aye resist,
And doubt enshrouds him to the bitter end.
[*Kneeling again near the body.*
Oh! God! look down with pity on his soul.
Alas! 'twas frail, unfaithful, wavering.
But oh! Divine Redeemer of the world,
Be not unmindful that his dying gasp
Sent forth a cry for mercy at Thy hands.
Oh!—in Thy martyr's name,—that mercy grant.
How can I think Thou wouldst deny to him
His cherished victory? Ah! no, my God,
Thy martyr hath not prayed for him in vain,
Nor vainly hath another Abel's blood
Cried out aloud from earth to Thee in Heaven.
Then hope I still. [*Listening without rising.*
Methinks that Catesby comes.

Enter CATESBY, TILNEY, TRESHAM, FITTON, L.

Cates. [*entering*]. Oh! glorious day!
Til. [*following*]. And yet, a day of shame!
Wal. Softly, my friends, you stand before the dead
Til. Who's he?
Tresh. The bishop?
Wal. [*rising*]. Ay, his life is spent.
The scholar and the master,—both were slain
At one fell stroke. But, if I judge aright,
He died repentant.

Fitt. P'raps a Catholic.
Wal. So will we hope. But grace hath struck elsewhere. [*To all.*
She gives to you a brother.
Tresh. In thyself?
Wal. A worthless conquest of victorious blood,
I'm yours.
Tresh. A double festival on high!
Fitt. The just man mounts triumphant up to Heav'n;
The long-lost sheep returneth to the fold.
Cates. [*taking* WALPOLE *by the hand*].
Such was my constant hope.
Wal. His martyrdom
Has left a gap within your holy ranks.
'Tis mine to fill it. And God grant that I
[*Pointing to Tyburn.*
May pay my debt of love on yon same spot.
Til. And, as for us, we'll cherish ever more
These sorrows, mingled with austere delights.
This day hath seen three martyrs crown'd in Heav'n!
Tresh. Then, God bless England! May His saving hand
Restore the *One True Faith* to this dark land!

R. L.

TILNEY, CATESBY, WALPOLE, TRESHAM, FITTON.

FINIS.

L. D. S.

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LONGHAYE, REV. G.

AUTHOR

Campion-A Tragedy in 4 Acts

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